

E L O I S A :

Or, a SERIES of

ORIGINAL LETTERS.



Vol. II,

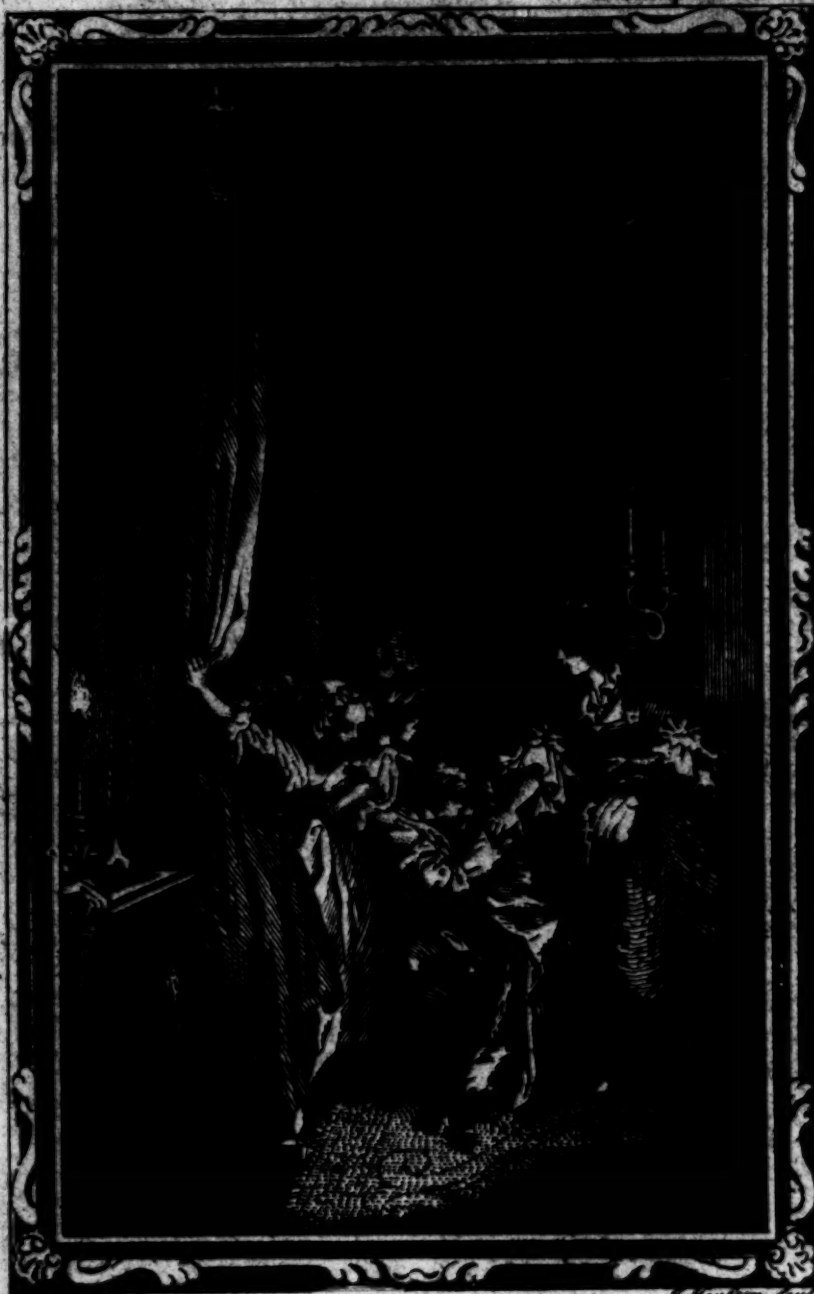
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ORIGINAL LETTERS







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J. Knapp sculp.

The Infection of Love.

Letter. CVI.

ELOISA:
Or, a **SERIES** of
ORIGINAL LETTERS

Collected and published
By **J. J. ROUSSEAU.**

Translated from the **FRENCH.**

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ELOISA.

LETTER LXXIV.

From Lord B—— to ELOISA.

OW, charming Eloisa, we gain our point: a lucky mistake of our friend hath brought him to reason. The shame of finding himself a moment in the wrong has dissipated his phrenzy, and rendered him so tractable that we may manage him for the future as we please. It is with pleasure I see the fault he reproaches himself with, attended rather with contrition than anger; and I know how highly he esteems me, from that humility and confusion he seems to feel when I am present, though under no embarrassment or constraint. His sensibility of the injury he has done me disarms my resentment. When the offender thus acknowledges his crime, he reaps more honour by such a reparation of his fault, than the offended in bestowing him a pardon.

don. I have taken the advantage of this change, and the effect it has produced, to enter into some necessary measures with him before my departure, which I now cannot defer much longer. As I purpose to return the approaching summer, we have agreed that he shall go wait for me at Paris, from whence we shall proceed together to England.

London is the most extensive theatre in the world for the display of great talents *. Those of our friend are in many respects of the first rank; and I despair not of seeing him, with some little assistance, soon strike out something in his way to fortune, worthy of his merit. I will be more explicit as to my intentions when I see you; in the mean time, you will readily conceive the importance of his success may encou-

* This it is to entertain unreasonable prejudices in favour of one's own country. I have never heard of a people, among whom foreigners in general are so ill received, and find so many obstacles to their advancement as among the English. From the peculiar taste of this nation, foreigners are encouraged in nothing; and by the form of government, they are excluded from all emoluments. We must agree in their favour, however, that an Englishman is never obliged to any person for that hospitality he churlishly refuses others. Where, except in London, is there to be seen any of these insolent islanders servilely cringing at court? In what country except their own do they seek to make their fortunes? They are churlish it is true, but their churlishness does not displease me, while it is consistent with justice. I think it very well they should be nothing but *Englishmen*; since they have no occasion to be *men*.

rage



rage him to surmount many difficulties, and that there are various modes of distinction which may compensate for inferiority of birth, even in the opinion of your father. This appears to me the only expedient that remains to be tried, in order to effect your mutual happiness, since prejudice and fortune have deprived you of all others.

I have written for Regianino to come post hither, and to remain with me during the eight or ten days I shall yet stay with our friend. He is too deeply afflicted to admit of much conversation: music will serve to fill up the vacant hours of silence, indulge his reveries, and sooth his grief by degrees into a peaceful melancholy. I wait only to see him in such a temper of mind to leave him to himself; and before that, I dare not trust him. As for Regianino, I will leave him with you as I pass by, and shall not take him from you again till I return from Italy; by which time, I imagine, from the progress you have already made, his assistance will be unnecessary. Just at present he is certainly useless to Eloisa, and I deprive her of nothing by detaining him here for a few days.

L E T T E R LXXV.

To CLARA.

AH, why do I live to open my eyes on my own unworthiness! O that I had for ever closed them, rather than thus to look on the disgrace into which I am fallen; rather than to find myself the most abject, after having been the

most fortunate of men ! generous and amiable friend, to whose care I have been so often obliged, still let me pour my complaints into your compassionate heart ; still let me implore your assistance, sensible, and ashamed as I am of my own demerits : abandoned by myself, it is to you I fly for consolation. Heavens ! how can it be that a man so contemptible should ever be beloved by her ; or that a passion for so divine an object should not have refined my soul : let her now blush at her choice, she whose name I am no longer worthy to repeat. Let her sigh to see her image profaned by dwelling in a heart so abject and mean. What hatred and disdain doth she not owe a wretch, that, inspired by love, could be yet servile and base ! you shall know, my charming * cousin, the cause of my disgrace : you shall know my crime and penitence. Be you my judge, and let me perish by your sentence ; or be my advocate, and let the adorable object on whom depended the past, conduct my future fortune.

I will say nothing of the effect which so unexpected a separation had on me : I will say nothing of the excess of my grief, or the extravagance of my despair ; you will judge of them too well from the unaccountable behaviour into which they betrayed me. The more sensible I grew of the misery of my situation, the less I conceived it possible for me voluntarily to give up Eloisa ; and the bitterness of this reflection, joined to the amazing generosity of Lord B—,

* In imitation of Eloisa, he calls Clara, his cousin, and Clara, after her example, likewise calls him her friend.

awaked suspicions, on which I shall never reflect without horror, and which I can never forget without ingratitude to the friend whose generosity could forgive them.

Revolving in my phrenzy the several circumstances attending my departure, I imagined I discovered it to be a premeditated scheme, which I rashly attributed to the most virtuous of mortals. That dreadful suspicion no sooner suggested itself than every circumstance appeared to confirm it. My Lord's conversation with the baron d'Etange, and his peremptory manner, which I took to be affected, the quarrel which ensued, Eloisa's being forbid to see me, and their resolution to send me away, the diligence and secrecy of the preparations made for my departure, his Lordship's discourse with me the preceding evening; in short, the rapidity with which I was rather forced than conducted hither: all these circumstances seemed to prove that my Lord had formed a scheme to separate me from Eloisa; and lastly, his intended return assured me that I had discovered his designs. I resolved, however, to get more particular information before I broke with him; and with this design set myself to examine the matter with attention. But every thing conspired to increase my ridiculous suspicions; all his generous and humane actions in my favour, were converted by my jealousy into so many instances of his perfidy. I knew that he wrote to Eloisa from Besançon, without communicating to me the contents of his letter, or giving me the least hint. I thought myself therefore sufficiently assured of the truth of what I suspected, and waited only for his receiving an

answer to his letter, which, I hoped, might be disagreeable, to come to the explanation I meditated.

Last night we returned home pretty late, and I knew he had received a packet from Switzerland, of which however he took no notice when we retired. I let him have time to open it, and heard him from my apartment reading in a low voice; I listened attentively, and overheard him thus exclaim to himself, in broken sentences, *Alas, Eloisa! I strove to render you happy—I honoured your virtues,—but I grieve at your delusion.*—At these and other similar exclamations, which I distinctly heard, I was no longer master of myself; I snatched up my sword, and taking it under my arm, forced open the door, and rushed like a madman into his chamber; but I will not soil my paper, nor offend your delicacy with the injurious expressions my rage dictated, to urge him to fight me on the spot.

Here, my dear cousin, I must confess to have seen the most extraordinary instance of the influence of true wisdom, even over the most susceptible mind, when we listen to her dictates. At first he could not comprehend whence arose my disorder, and took it for a real delirium. But the perfidy of which I accused him, the secret designs with which I reproached him, Eloisa's letter which he held in his hand, and which I incessantly mentioned, at length discovered the cause of my anger. He smiled, and said to me coldly, *You are certainly out of your senses; do you think me so void of discretion as to fight with a madman?* open your eyes, inconsiderate man, he said, in a milder tone, is it possible
you

you should accuse me of betraying you? Something, I know not what, in his voice and manner of speaking, struck me immediately with a sense of his innocence and my own folly. His reproof sunk into my heart, and I had no sooner met his looks than my suspicions vanished, and I began to think with horror on the extravagance I had committed. He perceived immediately this change of sentiment, and taking me by the hand, 'Tis well, said he, but if you had not recollected yourself before my justification, I would never have seen you more. As it is, and you have recovered your reason, read that letter, and know for once your friends. I would now have been excused from reading it, but the ascendant, which so many advantages had given him over me, made him insist on it with an air of authority; and, though my suspicions were vanished, I secretly wished to see it.

Think what a situation I was in, on reading a letter that informed me of the unparalleled obligations I was under, to a man I had so unworthily treated. I threw myself immediately at his feet, struck with admiration, affliction and shame: I embraced his knees with the utmost humiliation and concern, but could not utter a word. He received my penitence in the same manner as he did the outrage I had committed; and exacted no other recompense for the pardon he granted, than my promise that I would never more oppose his designs to serve me. Yes, he shall act for the future as he pleases: his sublime generosity is more than human, and it is as impossible to refuse his fa-

vours as it is to withstand the benevolence of the deity.

He gave afterwards two letters out of the packet, addressed to me, and which he would not deliver before he had read his own, that he might be made acquainted with the resolution of your cousin. In perusing them I found what a mistress and friend heaven had bestowed on me: I saw how it had connected me with the most perfect patterns of generosity and virtue, to render my remorse the more keen, and my meanness the more contemptible. Say, who is that matchless fair, whose beauty is her least perfection; who, like the divinity, makes herself equally adored for the dispensation of good and evil. It is Eloisa; she has undone me; yet cruel as she is, I love and admire her but the more. The more unhappy she makes me, the more perfect she appears; and every pain she gives, is a new instance of her perfection. The sacrifice she has made to *nature* both afflicts and charms me; it enhances even the value of that which she made to *love*. No, my Eloisa can make no refusal that is not of equal value to what she bestows. And you, my charming, my truly deserving cousin, the only perfect model of friendship your sex can boast, an instance which minds, not formed like yours, will never believe real: tell not me of philosophy, I despise its vain parade of idle terms; I despise that phantom of wisdom which teaches us to brave the passions at a distance, but flies, and leaves us a prey to them the moment they approach. Abandon me not, Clara, to a distracted mind; withdraw not your wonted kindness from a wretch, who, though he deserves

serves it no longer, desires it more ardently, and stands more in need of it, than ever. Assist me to recover my former self, and let your gentle counsel supply the dictates of reason to my afflicted heart.

I will yet hope I am not fallen into irretrievable disgrace. I feel that pure and sacred flame I once cherished, rekindle within me. The sublime examples before me shall not be set in vain. The virtues which I love and admire I will imitate. Yes, divine Eloisa! I will yet do honour to your choice; and, you, my friends, whose esteem I am determined to regain, my awakened soul shall gather new strength and life from yours. Chaste love and sacred friendship shall restore that constancy of mind, of which a cowardly despair had deprived me; the pure sensations of my heart shall supply the place of wisdom: you shall make me every thing I ought to be, and I will compel you to forget my fall, in consideration of my endeavours to rise. I know not, neither do I desire to know, the future lot which providence assigns me; be it what it will, I will render myself worthy of that which I have already enjoyed. The image of Eloisa, never to be erased from my mind, shall be my shield, and render my soul invulnerable. I have lived long enough for my own happiness, I will now live to her honour. Oh, that I could but live so supremely virtuous, that the admiring world should say, how could he do less who was loved by Eloisa?

P. S. From ties abhorred *and perhaps inevitable!* what is the meaning of those words? they are in Eloisa's letter. Clara, I am

attentive to every, the minutest circumstance; I am resigned to fortune: but those words—whatever may happen, I will never leave this place till I have an explanation of those words.

L E T T E R LXXVI.

From ELOISA.

CAN it be that my soul has not excluded all delight, and that a sense of joy yet penetrates my heart? alas! I conceived it insensible to any thing but sorrow: I thought I should do nothing but suffer, when you left me, and that absence had no consolations; your letter to my cousin has undeceived me; I have read and bath'd it with tears of compassion. It has shed a sweet refreshing dew over a drooping heart, dried up with vexation and sorrow. The peaceful serenity it has caused in my soul convinces me of the ascendant you hold, whether present or absent, over the affections of Eloisa. Oh! my friend, how much it delights me to see you recover that strength of mind which becomes the resolution of a man. I esteem you for it the more, and despise myself the less, in that the dignity of a chaste affection is not totally debased between us, and that our hearts are not both at once corrupted. I will say more, as we can at present speak freely of our affairs. That which most aggravated my despair, was to see that yours deprived us of the only resource we had left, the exertion of your abilities, to improve them. You now know the worth
of

of the friendship with which heaven has blessed you, in that of my lord B—, whose generosity merits the services of your whole life, nor can you ever sufficiently atone for the offence you have committed. I hope you will need no other warning to make you guard for the future against your impetuous passions. It is under the protection of this honourable friend that you are going to enter on the stage of the world; it is under the sanction of his credit, under the guidance of his experience, that you go to revenge the cause of injured merit, on the cruelty of fortune.

Do that for his sake which you did not for your own. Endeavour at least to respect his goodness, by not rendering it useless to yourself. Behold a pleasing prospect still before you: contemplate the success you have reason to hope for in entering the lists where every thing conspires to ensure the victory. Heaven has been lavish to you of its bounties; your natural genius, cultivated by taste, has endowed you with every necessary and agreeable qualification; at least, at four-and-twenty you possess all the charms of youth, matured by the reflection of age.

Frutto senile in su'l giovenil fiore.

The fruit of age amidst the bloom of youth.

Study has not impaired your vivacity, nor injured your person; insipid gallantry has not contracted your genius, nor formality your understanding: but love, inspiring those sublime sentiments which are its genuine offspring, hath given you that elevation of mind and justness of conception from which it is inseparable *. I have seen your

* Simple Eloisa! you give no proof here of yours

mind expanded by its gentle warmth, display its brilliant faculties, as a flower that unfolds itself to the rays of the sun; you possess at once every talent that leads to fortune, and should set you above it: you need only aspire to be considerable, to become so; and I hope that object for whose sake you should covet distinction, will excite in you a greater zeal for those marks of the world's esteem, than of themselves they may deserve.

You are going, my friend, far from me—my best beloved is going to fly from his Eloisa.—It must be so,—it is necessary that we should part at present, if we mean ever to be happy; on the success of your undertakings also depends our last hope of such an event—Oh, may the anticipation of it animate and comfort you during our cruel, perhaps long separation! may it inspire you with that zeal, which surmounts every obstacle. The world and its affairs will indeed continually engage your attention, and relieve you from the pangs of absence. But I, alas! remain alone, abandoned to my own thoughts, or subject to the persecution of others, that will oblige me incessantly to lament your absence. Happy, however, shall I be, in some measure, if groundless alarms do not aggravate my real afflictions, and if the evils I actually suffer be not augmented by those to which you may be exposed—I shudder at the thoughts of the various dangers to which your life and innocence will be liable. I place in you all the confidence a man can expect; but, since it is our lot to live asunder, O my friend, I could wish you were something more than man. Will you not stand in need of frequent advice to regulate
your

your conduct in a world, to which you are so much a stranger? It does not belong to me, young and unexperienced, and even less qualified by reflexion and study than yourself, to advise you here. That difficult task I leave to lord B——, I will content myself to recommend to you two things, as these depend more on sentiment than experience; and, tho' I know but little of the world, I flatter myself I am not to be instructed in the knowledge of your heart: *Be virtuous, and remember Eloisa.*

I will not make use of any of those subtle arguments you have taught me to despise; and which, though they fill so many volumes, never yet made one man virtuous. Peace to those gloomy reasoners! to what ravishing delights their hearts are strangers! leave, my friend, those idle moralists, and consult your own breast. It is there you will always find a spark of that sacred fire, which hath so often inflamed us with love for the sublimest virtue. It is there you will trace the lasting image of true beauty, the contemplation of which inspires us with a sacred enthusiasm; an image which the passions may continually defile, but never can efface*. Remember those tears of pleasure, those palpitations of heart, those transports which raised us above ourselves at the recital of heroic examples, which have done honour to human nature. Would you know which is most truly desirable, riches or virtue? reflect on that which the heart prefers in its unprejudiced

* The true philosophy of lovers is that of Plato; while the passion lasts they employ no other. A susceptible mind knows not how to quit this philosopher; while a cold insensible reader cannot endure him.

moments: think on that which interests us most in the perusal of history. Did you never cover the riches of Cræsus, the honours of Cæsar, nor the pleasures of Heliogabalus? If they were happy, why did not you wish to be placed in the same situation? But they were not, you were sensible they were not happy; you were sensible they were vile and contemptible; and that bad men, however fortunate, are not objects of envy.

What characters did you then contemplate with the greatest pleasure? what examples did you most admire? which did you desire most to imitate? inexpressible are the charms of ever-blooming virtue: it was the condemn'd Athenian, drinking hemlock; it was Brutus, dying for his country; it was Regulus, in the midst of tortures; it was Cato, plunging his dagger in his own breast. These were the unfortunate heroes, whose virtues excited your envy, while your own sensations bore witness of that real felicity they enjoyed, under their apparent misfortunes. Think not this sentiment peculiar to yourself; it is the sentiment of all mankind, and that frequently in spite of themselves. That divine image of virtue, imprinted universally on the mind, displays irresistible charms even to the least virtuous. No sooner doth passion permit us to contemplate its beauty, but we wish to resemble it; and, if the most wicked of mankind could but change his being, he would chuse to be virtuous.

Excuse this rhapsody, my dear friend, you know it is originally derived from you, and it is due to the passion that inspired it. I do not take upon me to instruct you, by repeating your own maxims, but endeavour to enforce their application.

plication to yourself. Now is the time to put in practice your own precepts, and to shew how well you can act what you so well know to teach. Though it is not expected you should be put to the trials of a Cato or a Regulus, yet every man ought to cherish a love for his country, resolution and integrity, and to keep his promise inviolable, even at the expence of his life. Private virtues are often the more sublime, as they less aspire to public approbation, but have their end in the testimony of a good conscience, which gives the virtuous a more solid satisfaction, than the loudest applauses of the multitude. Hence you may see true greatness is confirmed to no one station of life, and that no man can be happy who is not the object of his own esteem; for, if the height of self-enjoyment consists in the contemplation of the truly beautiful, how can the vicious man admire the beauty of virtue in others, and not be forced to despise himself. I am not apprehensive of your being corrupted by sensual pleasures; a heart so refined as yours will be in little danger from the gross seductions of appetite. But there are others more dangerous and sentimental. I dread the effects of the maxims and lessons of the world; I dread the force of vicious examples, so constantly present, and so generally prevalent: I dread those subtle sophisms by which vice is excused and defended: I dread, in short, lest your heart should impose upon itself, and render you less difficult about the means of acquiring importance than you would be, if our union were not to be the consequence. I only caution you, my friend, against the danger; your own discretion must do the rest: a foresight of acci-

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dental

dental evils, however, is no small step towards their prevention. I will add but one reflection more, which in my opinion, disproves the false arguments of vice, exposes the mistaken conceits of folly, and ought alone to direct a wise man to pursue his sovereign good. This is, that the source of true happiness is not confined to the desired object, nor to the heart which possesses it, but consists in a certain relation between the one and the other: that every object of our desires will not produce the happiness sought in its possession, nor is the heart at all times in a disposition to receive it. If the utmost refinement of intellectual pleasure is not sufficient alone to constitute our felicity, surely all the voluptuous pleasures on earth cannot make the depraved man happy. There is on both sides a necessary preparative, a certain combination of causes, from which results that delightful sensation so earnestly sought after by every sensible being, and for ever unexperienced by the pretended philosopher, who coldly nips his pleasures in the bud, for want of knowing how to foster them with that genial warmth, which would ripen them into perfect felicity. What helps it, then, to obtain one advantage at the expence of another? to gain *without* what we lose *within*? to procure the means of happiness, and lose the art of employing them? Is it not better also, if we can but enjoy one of these advantages, to sacrifice what the power of fortune may restore, to that which once lost can never be recovered? none should know better than I, who have embittered all the sweets of my life, by thinking to increase them. Let the vicious and profligate then, who display their good fortune but keep
I their

their hearts a secret, let them advance what they will; be assured that if there be one instance of happiness upon earth, it must be found in the breast of the virtuous. Heaven hath bestowed on you an happy inclination for what is virtuous and good: listen then only to your own desires, follow only your own inclinations, and think above all on the growth of our infant affections. So long as the remembrance of those delightful moments of innocence shall remain, it will be impossible that you should cease to love that which rendered them so endearing; it will be impossible the charms of moral excellence should ever be effaced from your mind, or that you should wish to obtain Eloisa by means unworthy of yourself. Can any one enjoy a pleasure for which he has lost the taste? no, to be able to possess what one loves, it is necessary the heart that loved it should be still the same.

I am come now to my second point: you see I have not forgot my logic; it is possible, my friend, without love to have the sublime sentiments of a great mind; but a love like ours supplies its flame, which being once extinguished, the soul becomes languid; and a heart once exhausted is good for nothing. Tell me, what should we be if we ceased to love? is it not better to lose our existence than our sensibility? or could you resolve to endure the life of an ordinary being, after having tasted every delight that can ravish the heart of man? you are going to visit populous cities, where your age and figure, rather than your merit, will lay a thousand snares for your fidelity. Insinuating coquetry will affect the language of tenderness,
and

please without deceiving you. You will not seek love, but enjoyment; you will taste it without love, and not know it for the same pleasure. I know not whether you will find in another the heart of Eloisa; but of this I am certain, you will never experience with another those extasies you have tasted with her. The vacancy of your exhausted mind will effect the destiny I predict. Sadness and care will overwhelm you in the midst of frivolous amusements. The remembrance of our first transports will pursue you in spite of yourself; my image, an hundred times more beautiful than I ever was, will overtake you. In a moment the veil of disgust will be thrown over all your delights, and a thousand bitter reflections rush into your mind. My best beloved, my amiable friend, Oh, should you ever forget me — Alas! I can but die; but you, you will live base and unhappy, and my death will be but too severely revenged.

Forget not then your Eloisa, who lived for you, and whose heart can never be another's. I can say nothing more regarding that dependance in which Providence hath placed me: but, after having recommended fidelity to you, it is but just to give you the only pledge of mine that is in my power. I have consulted, not my duty, my distracted mind knows that no longer, but I have examined my heart, the last guide of those who can follow no other; and behold the result of its examination: I am determined never to be your wife without the consent of my father, but I will never marry another without your consent; of this I give you my word, which, whatever happens, I will keep sacred;
nor

nor is there a power on earth can make he break my promise. Be not, therefore disquieted at what may befall me in your absence. Go, my dear friend, pursue, under the auspices of the most tender love, a destiny worthy to crown your merit: mine is in your hands, as much as it is in my power to commit it, and never shall it be altered but with your consent.

L E T T E R LXXVII.

To E L O I S A.

O qual fiamma di gloria, d' onore,

Scorrer sento per tutte le vene

Alma grande parlando con te!

By noblest sentiments inspired,

How pants my heart for virtuous fame!

While as you speak, to glory fired

I feel my bosom all on flame.

O ELOISA, let me breathe a moment,—you make me shudder, my blood boils, my heart pants; your letter glows with that sacred love of virtue which fires your breast, and communicates its celestial flame to the inmost recesses of mine. But why so many exhortations, where you should have laid on me your commands? do you think I can so far forget myself as to want arguments to excite me to act justly? at least, can I want to have them urged by you, whose injunctions alone I should fly to obey. Can you be ignorant that I ever will be what you please to have me? and that I could even act unjustly before I could disobey you? yes, I could.

could set another capitol in flames if you enjoined me, for nothing can be so dear to me as you are. But, do you know, my incomparable Eloisa, why you are thus dear? it is because you can desire nothing but what is virtuous, and that my admiration of your virtues exceeds even the love inspired by your charms. I go, encouraged by the engagement into which you have entered, the latter part of which, however, you might have omitted; for to promise not to be another's without my consent, is it not to promise to be none but mine? for my own part, I speak more freely, and pledge with you the faith of a man of honour, ever to remain sacred and inviolable: I am ignorant to what destiny fortune will lead me in the career I am going, for your satisfaction, to enter upon; but never shall the ties of love or marriage unite me to any other than Eloisa d'Etange. I live, I exist, but for her, and shall either die married to her, or not married at all. Adieu! I am pressed for time, and am going to depart this instant.

L E T T E R LXXVIII.

T O E L O I S A.

I Arrived last night at Paris, and he who once could not live two streets length removed from you, is now at the distance of more than an hundred leagues. Pity Eloisa, pity your unhappy friend: had the blood gushing from my veins, dy'd with its streams my long, long route, my spirits could not have failed me more; I could not have found myself more languid than

at

at present. O that I knew as well when we shall meet again, as I know the distance that divides us ! the progress of time should then compensate for the length of space. I would count every day, every hour of my life, my steps towards Eloisa. But that dismal career is hid in the gloom of futurity ; its bounds are concealed from my feeble sight. How painful, how terrible is suspense ! my restless heart is ever seeking, but finds you not. The sun rises, but gives me no hopes of seeing you ; it sets without granting me that blessing. My days are void of pleasure, and pass away as one long continued night. In vain I endeavour to rekindle my extinguished hopes, they offer me nothing but uncertainty and groundless consolations. Alas, my gentle friend ! what evils have I not to expect if they are to be a counterpoise to my past happiness !

But, I conjure you, let not my complaints alarm you ; they are only the cursory effects of solitude, and the disagreeable reflections of my journey. Fear not the return of my former weakness ; my heart is in your hands, Eloisa, and while you are its support it cannot debase itself. One of the comfortable fruits of your last letter is, that since I find myself sustained by a double share of spirits ; and though love should annihilate what is properly mine, I should still be a gainer ; the resolution with which you have inspired me being able to support me better than I could otherwise have supported myself. I am convinced it was not good for man to be alone. Human minds must be united to exert their greatest strength, and the united force of friendly souls, like that of the collateral bars of an artificial

ficial magnet, is incomparably greater than the sum of their separate forces. This is thy triumph, celestial friendship! but what is even friendship itself, compared to that perfect union of souls, which connects the most perfect, the most harmonious amity, with ties an hundred times more sacred? where are the men whose ideas, gross as their appetites, represent the passion of love only as a fever in the blood, the effect of brutal instinct? let them come to me, let them observe, let them feel what, passes in my breast; let them view an unhappy lover separated from his beloved object, doubtful whether ever he shall see her more, and hopeless of retrieving his lost happiness; animated, however, by the never dying flame, which, kindled by your beauties, has been nourished by your mental charms, they will see him ready to brave the rigours of adversity; to be deprived even of your lovely self, and to cherish all those virtues that you have inspired, and which embellish that adorable image that shall never be erased from my soul. O my Eloisa, what should I be without you? informed indeed by dispassionate reason, a cold admirer of virtue, I might have respected it in any one. I shall now do more, I shall now be enabled to put it zealously in practice, and penetrated by your example, shall excite those who have known us to exclaim: — “ what happy creatures should we be, if all the women in the world were Eloisas, and all the men had hearts susceptible of their charms !”

As I was meditating during my journey, on your last letter, I formed a resolution of collecting together all those you have written to me ;

as I no longer can attend to your delightful counsel from your own mouth. For though there is not one which I have not learnt by heart, I love to read them continually, and to contemplate the characters of that lovely hand which alone can make me happy: but the paper wears out by degrees, and therefore, before they fall quite in pieces, I design to copy each letter in a book, which I have already prepared for that purpose. It is pretty large, but I provide for the time to come, and even hope to live long enough to fill more than one volume. I set apart my evenings for the delightful employment, and proceed but slowly, in order to prolong so agreeable a task. This inestimable volume I will never part with; it shall be the manual of my devotions, my companion through the world which I am going to enter; it shall be my antidote against the pernicious maxims of society; it shall comfort me under my afflictions; it shall prevent or amend my errors; it shall afford me instruction in my youth, and yield me edification in age: the first love-letters, Eloisa, that perhaps ever were put to such an use! With respect to your last epistle which I have before me, excellent as it appears to me, I find however one thing you should have omitted. You may think it strange; but it is much more so that this very article should particularly regard yourself, and that I blame you even for writing it at all. Why do you talk to me of fidelity and constancy? you once were better acquainted both with my passion and your own power. Ah, Eloisa, do you entertain such changeable sentiments? what, though I had promised you nothing, should I the sooner
cease

cease to be yours? Oh, no, it was at the first glance you directed to me, at the first word you spoke, at the first motion of my heart, that a flame was kindled in my soul which can never be extinguished. Had I never seen you since that first moment, it had been enough, it had been afterwards too late to have ever forgotten you. And is it possible for me to forget you now? now that, intoxicated with my past felicity, the very remembrance of it makes me still happy? now, that the soul which once animated me, is fled, and I live only by that which Eloisa hath inspired? now, that I despise myself for expressing so coldly what I so sensibly feel? should all the beauties in the universe display their charms to seduce me, is there one amongst them could eclipse thine? let them all combine to captivate my heart; let them pierce, let them wound it, let them break to pieces, this faithful mirror of my Eloisa, her unsullied image will not cease to be reflected from its smallest fragments, for nothing is able to drive it thence. No, not omnipotence itself can go thus far; it may annihilate my soul, but cannot permit its existence and make it cease to love Eloisa.

Lord B—— has undertaken to give you an account of my affairs, and what he has projected in my favour: but I am afraid he will not strictly fulfil his promise with respect to his present plan. For you are to know that he has abused the right his beneficence has given him over me, in extending it beyond the bounds of generosity. The pension he has settled on me, and by which he has made me independent, has put me in a condition to make an appearance here much
above

above my rank, and perhaps even that which I shall have occasion to make in London. While I am here, as I have nothing to do, I live just as I please, and shall have no temptation to throw away the savings of my income in idle expences. You, Eloisa, have taught me that our principal, at least our most pressing wants, are those of a benevolent mind; and, as long as one individual is deprived of the necessaries of life, what virtuous man will riot in its superfluities?

L E T T E R LXXIX.

T O E L O I S A.

* **I** Enter with a secret horror on this vast desert, the world; whose confused prospect appears to me only as a frightful scene of solitude and

• Without anticipating the judgment which the reader, or, Eloisa may pass on the following narratives, it may not be improper to observe, that, if I had written them myself, though I might not have made them better, I should have done it in a different manner. I was several times going to cancel them, and substitute others written in my own way in their place; but I have at length ventured to insert them as they are. I bethought myself that, a young man of four and twenty ought not to see things in the same light as a man of fifty, whom experience had too well instructed to place them in a proper point of view. I reflected also, that, without having played any great part in life, I was not however, in a situation to speak with absolute impartiality. Let these letters pass then as they were originally written. The common-place remarks, or trivial observations that

and silence. In vain my soul endeavours to shake off the universal restraint it lies under. It was the saying of a celebrated ancient, that he was never less alone than when by himself: for my part, I am never alone but when I mix with the crowd, and am neither with you nor with any body else. My heart would speak, but it feels there is none to hear: it is ready to answer, but no one says any thing that regards it. I understand not the language of the country, and no body here understands mine. Yet I own that I am greatly carested, and that all the obliging offices of friendship and civility are readily offered to me: this is the very thing of which I complain. The officious zeal of thousands is ever on the wing to oblige me, but I know not how to entertain immediately a friendship for men I have never seen before. The honest feelings of humanity, the plain and affecting openness of a frank heart, are expressed in a different manner, from those false appearances of politeness, and that external flattery, which the customs of the world require. I am not a little afraid that he, who treats me at first sight, as if I was a friend of twenty years standing, will at the end of twenty years, if I should want his assistance, treat me as a stranger; and, when I see men, lost in dissipation, pretend to take so tender a part in the concerns of every may be found in them, are but small faults and will import little. But it is of the greatest importance to a lover of truth, that to the end of his life, his passions should never affect the impartiality of his writings.—The above note is omitted by the author in his last corrected edition of this work.

one, I readily presume they are interested for no body but themselves.

There is, however, some truth in all this profession: the French are naturally good-natured, open, hospitable, and generous. But they have a thousand modes of expression which are not to be too strictly understood; a thousand apparent offers of kindness which they make only to be refused. They are no more than the snares of politeness laid for rustic simplicity. I never before heard such profusion of promises: *you may depend on my serving you, command my credit, my purse, my house, my equipage.*——But, if all this were sincere, and literally taken, there would not be a people upon earth less attached to property. The community of possessions would be in a manner already established; the rich always making offers, and the poor accepting them, both would naturally soon come upon a level, and not the citizens of Sparta itself could ever have been more upon an equality than would be the people of Paris. On the contrary, there is not a place, perhaps, in the world, where the fortunes of men are so unequal, where are displayed at once the most sumptuous opulence, and the most deplorable poverty. This is surely sufficient to prove the insignificance of that apparent commiseration, which every one here affects to have for the wants and sufferings of others, and that tenderness of heart, which in a moment contracts eternal friendship.

But if, instead of attending to professions so justly to be suspected, and assurances so liable to deceive, I desire information, and would seek knowledge; here is its most agreeable source.

One is immediately charmed with the good sense which is to be met with in company of the French; not only among the learned, but with men of all ranks, and even among the women; the turn of conversation is always easy and natural, it is neither dull nor frivolous, but learned without pedantry, gay, without noise, polite without affectation, gallant without being fulsome, and jocular without being immodest. Their discourse is neither made up of dissertations nor epigrams; they reason without argumentation, and are witty without punning; they artfully unite reason and vivacity, maxims and rhapsodies; and mix the most pointed satire and refined flattery with strictness of morals. They talk about every thing, because every one has something to say; they examine nothing to the bottom for fear of being tedious, but propose matters in a cursory manner, and pass them over with rapidity: every one gives his opinion, and supports it in few words; no one attacks with virulence that of another, nor obstinately defends his own; they discuss the point only for the sake of improvement and stop before it comes to a dispute: every one improves, every one amuses himself, and they part all satisfied with each other; even the philosopher himself carrying away something worthy his private meditation.

But, after all, what kind of knowledge do you think is to be gained from such agreeable conversation? to form a just judgment of life and manners; to make a right use of society; to know, at least, the people with whom we converse; there is nothing, E'loisa, of all this: all that is here to be learnt, is to plead artfully the cause of falsehood,

hood ; to confound, by philosophy, all the principles of virtue ; to throw a false colour, by the help of sophistry, on the passions and prejudices of mankind ; and to give a certain turn to error, agreeable to the fashionable mode of thinking. It is not necessary to know the characters of men, but their interests, to guess their sentiments on any occasion. When a man talks on any subject, he rather expresses the opinions of his garb or his fraternity, than his own, and will change them as often as he changes his situation and circumstances.

Dress him up, for instance, by turns, in the robe of a judge, a peer, and a divine, and you shall hear him successively stand up with the same zeal for the rights of the people, the despotism of the prince, and the authority of the inquisition. There is one kind of reason for the lawyer, another for the officer of the revenue, and a third for the soldier. Each of them can demonstrate the other two to be knaves ; a conclusion not very difficult to be drawn by all three *. Thus men do not speak their own sentiments,

* We ought, perhaps, to overlook this reasoning in a Swiss, who sees his own country well governed without the establishment of either of these professions. How can a state subsist without soldiers for its defence ! no, every state must have defenders. But its members ought to be soldiers from principle, and not by profession. The same individuals among the Greeks and Romans were frequently magistrates in the city, and officers in the field ; and never were either of those functions better discharged, than before those strange prejudices took place, which now separate and dishonour them.

but those they would instil into others, and the zeal which they affect is only the mask of interest. You may imagine, however, that such persons as are unconnected and independant, have at least a personal character, and an opinion of their own. Not at all: they are only different machines, which never think for themselves, but are set going by springs.

You need only inform yourself of their company, their clubs, their friends, the women they visit, the authors they are acquainted with; and you may immediately tell what will be their opinion of the next book that is published, the next play that is acted, the works of this or that writer they knew nothing of, or this or that system of which they have not one idea. As ordinary clocks, also, are wound up to go but four and twenty hours, so are these people under the necessity of going every evening into company, to know what they are to think the next day.

Hence it is, that there is but a small number of both sexes, who think for all the rest, and for whom all the rest talk and act. As every one considers his own particular interest, and none of them that of the public; and as the interests of individuals are always opposed, there is amongst them a perpetual clashing of parties and cabals, a continual ebb and flow of prepossessions and contrary opinions; amidst which the most violent tempers, agitated only by the rest, seldom understand a word of the matter in dispute. Every club has its rules, its opinions, its principles, which are no where else admitted. An honest man at one house is a knave at the next door,

door. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, truth, and even virtue itself, have all only a limited and local existence. Whoever chuses a general acquaintance, therefore, and goes into different societies, should be more pliable than Alcibiades; he should change his principles with his company, new-model his sentiments in a manner at every step, and lay down his maxims by the rod. He ought at every visit to leave his conscience, if he has one, at the door, and take up with that belonging to the house; as a new servant, on his entrance, puts on his livery, which he leaves behind him when turned out, and if he chuses it, again takes up his own, which serves him till he gets a new suit with a new place. But what is still more extraordinary, is, that every one here is perpetually contradicting himself, without being concerned at all about it. They have one set of principles for conversation, and another for their actions; nor is any body scandalized at their inconsistency, it being generally agreed they should be very different. It is not required of an author, particularly of a moral writer, that he should maintain in conversation what he advances in his works; nor that he should put in practice what he inculcates. His writings, conversation, and conduct, are three things essentially different, which he is not at all obliged to reconcile to each other. In a word, every thing is absurd, and yet nothing offends, because absurdity is the fashion. Nay, there is attached to this incongruity of principles and manners, a fashionable air of which they are proud, and which is frequently affected. In fact, although

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every one zealously preaches up the maxims of his profession, he piques himself on the carriage and manners of another. The attorney, for instance, assumes the martial air of a soldier, and a petty clerk of the customs, the supercilious deportment of a lord; the bishop affects the gallantry of a fine gentleman; the cou-tier the precision of a philosopher; and the statesman the repartee and raillery of a wit. Even the plain mechanick, who knows not how to put on the airs of any other profession, dresses himself up in a suit of black on Sundays, in order to pass for a practitioner in the law. The military gentlemen alone, despising every other profession, preserve, without affectation, the manners of their own, which, to say the truth, are insufferable. Not that M. de Muralt was in the wrong, when he gave the preference to the conversation of a soldier; but, what might be true in his time, is no longer so. The progress of literature has since improved conversation in general; and, as the gentlemen of the army despised such improvement in theirs, that which used to be the best, is at length become the worst*.

Hence it is, that the persons we talk to are not those with whom we converse; their sen-

* This reflection, whether true or false, can be extended only to the sub-literns, and those who do not reside in Paris; for almost all the great and polite men in the kingdom are in the service, and even the court itself is military. But there is a great difference between the manners acquired in a campaign, and those which are contracted by living in gar-

ments

timents do not come from the heart; their knowledge is not the acquisition of their own genius; their conversation does not discover their thoughts; and one perceives nothing of them but their figure. Thus a man in company here, is nearly in the same situation as if he were spectator of a moving picture, where he himself is the only figure capable of self-motion.

Such are the notions I have formed of great societies, by that which I have seen at Paris. They may, nevertheless, be rather adapted to my own particular situation than to the true state of things; and will doubtless improve as I become more acquainted with the manners of the world. Besides this, I have hitherto kept no other company than that into which I have been introduced by the friends of Lord B —, and am sensible it is necessary to descend to persons of different ranks, to know the peculiar manners of a country; those of the opulent being almost every where the same. I shall endeavour to inform myself better hereafter; in the mean time, I leave you to judge whether I had not sufficient reason to call this crowded scene a desert, and to be terrified by a solitude, where I find only an empty appearance of sentiments and of sincerity, that falsifies itself in the instant of expression; and where I perceive only the mere apparitions of men, phantoms that strike the eye for a moment, but are insensible to the touch? Hitherto I have seen a great number of masks; when shall I behold the faces of mankind?

LETTER LXXX.

From ELOISA.

YES, my friend, we shall continue to be united, notwithstanding our separation; we shall be happy in spite of fortune. It is the union of minds which constitutes their true felicity; the mutual attraction of hearts does not follow the *ratio* of their distance, and ours would be in contact, were they distant as the poles asunder. I am sensible with you that true lovers have a thousand expedients to soothe the pains of absence, and to fly to each others arms in a moment. Hence have they more frequent interviews even in absence, than when they see each other every day; for no sooner is either alone, than they are both together. If you, my friend, can taste that pleasure every evening, I feast on it a hundred times a day. I am more alone, and am surrounded by objects I cannot look on without calling you to mind, without finding you ever near me.

Qui canto dolcemente, e qui s'assise:

Qui si rivolse, e qui ritenne il passo;

Qui co' begli occhi me trafise il core:

Qui disse una parola, e qui sorrise.

Each well-known object, left behind,

Recalls my lover to my mind:

'Twas here, I cry, he sat and sung,

While fondly on his lips I hung;

Here kindly spoke, here sweetly smil'd,

And there his looks my heart beguil'd.

But is it so with you? can you thus alleviate the pains of absence? can you experience the

sweets of a peaceful and tender passion, that speaks to the heart without inflaming the senses? Are your griefs at present more prudent than were formerly your desires? the violence of your first letter still makes me tremble. I dread those deceitful transports, by so much the more dangerous, as the imagination which excites them is the less subject to controul; and, I fear, lest even your excess of love should prove injurious to the object of it. Alas! you know not, your sensations are too indelicate to perceive how offensive to love is an irrational homage. You do not consider that your life is mine, nor that self-preservation leads us frequently to destruction. Sensual man! will you never learn to love? call to mind those peaceful, those tender sensations you once felt, and so affectingly described. If such be the highest pleasures which even happy lovers can taste, they are the only ones wherein those who pine in absence are permitted to indulge themselves; and those who once have felt them, though but for a moment, should never regret the loss of any other. I remember the reflections we made in reading your Plutarch, on the sensuality and depravity of taste, which debase our nature. Were such wretched pleasures attended only with the circumstance of their not being mutual, it were enough, we said, to render them insipid and contemptible. Let us apply the same conclusion to the fallies of an extravagant imagination, to which it is no less applicable. What can the wretch enjoy whose pleasures are confined to himself alone? his pleasures are lifeless, but thine, O love! are animated and generous delights. It is the union of souls: we receive more pleasure from that which we excite, than from our own enjoyment.

But, pray tell me, my friend, in what language, or rather, in what jargon, is the description you give me in your last letter? did you not make use of it as an occasional display of your wit? if you intend to repeat it in your letters to me, it will be necessary to send me a dictionary. What is it you mean by the opinion of a garb? by a conscience that is to be put off and on like a livery? by laying down maxims by the rod? how would you have a poor simple Swiss comprehend those sublime tropes and figures? have you not already borrowed some of the tinsel understanding of the people you describe? take care, my good friend, how you proceed. Do you not think the metaphors of the chevalier Marini, which you have so often laughed at, bear some resemblance to your own? if a garment may be said to think, in a letter, why not that fire may sweat in a sonnet*?

To observe in the space of three weeks all the different company that is kept in a great city; to pass judgment on their conversation; to distinguish precisely the false from the true; the real from the affected; the difference between their thoughts and words; this is the very thing for which the French are frequently censured by people of other countries; but this nation especially deserves to be studied more at leisure. I as little approve also of persons speaking ill of a country where they reside and are well received: they had better, in my judg-

* *Sudate, O fochi, a preparar metalli.*

Ye sweating fir's, that in the furnace blaze.

A line of a sonnet by Marini.
ment,

ment, submit to be deceived by appearances, than to moralize at the expence of their hosts. In short, I always suspect the candour of those observers, who set up for wits. I am always apprehensive lest they should insensibly sacrifice the real state of things to the arts of description, and affect a brilliancy of stile at the expence of truth.

You know, my friend, the saying of Muralt, that wit is the epidemical madness of the French: I am mistaken if I do not discover some marks of your being yourself infected with this phrenzy. There is this difference, however, that while it is agreeable enough in the French, the Swiss are of all people in the world those whom it becomes least. There is something very quaint, and far-fetched in many passages of your letter. I do not speak of the lively turn or animated expressions, which are dictated by any peculiar strength of sentiments, but of that affected prettiness of stile, which being unnatural in itself, can be natural to no people whatever, but betrays the absurd pretensions of the person who uses it. Pretensions, with those we love, good God! ought not all our pretensions to be confined to the object beloved? It may be permitted to enliven an indifferent conversation with such rhetorical flourishes, and they may pass off as fine strokes of wit; but this is not the language adapted to the intercourse of lovers; the florid jargon of gallantry comes less from the heart than the most rude and simple of all dialects. I appeal to yourself: did wit ever find an opportunity to intrude into our private parties? if those fond, those endearing conversations

fations had a charm to dispel and keep wit at a distance, how ill-suited are its embellishments to the letters of absence, always clouded in some measure with sorrow; and in which the heart expresses itself with peculiar tenderness? but, though every passion truly great should be serious, excess of joy sooner calling forth our tears than our smiles, I would not have love be always sad; its chearfulness should, nevertheless, be simple and unaffected, without art, without embellishment, and undissembled as the passion itself. In a word, I would have love appear in its native graces, and not in the false ornaments of wit.

My *constant companion*, in whose apartment I write this letter, pretends, that in the beginning of it I had just that pleasantry of disposition which love inspires; but I know not what is become of it. In proportion as I proceed, a languor invades my heart, and hardly leaves me spirits to write the reproaches she would have me make you. For you are to know the above hypercriticisms are rather hers than my own. It was she that dictated in particular the first article, laughing like an idiot, and insisting on my not altering a single syllable. She says, it is to teach you to respect Marini, whom she patronizes and you have the presumption to ridicule.

But can you guess the cause of our good humour? it is her approaching marriage. The contract was signed last night, and the day is fixed for Monday sevensnight. If ever love was a chearful passion, it is surely so with her: surely no girl was ever so droll upon the like occasion.

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The good Mr. Orbe, whose head is also a little turned, was highly delighted with the comical manner in which he was received. Less difficult to be pleased than you were, he takes great pleasure in adding to the pleasantry of courtship, and looks upon the art of diverting his mistress as a master-piece in making love. For her part, we may talk to her as we please of decorum, tell her as much as we will of the grave and serious turn she ought to assume on the point of matrimony, and of doing honour to the virgin state she is going to quit: she laughs at all we can say, as ridiculous grimace, and tells Mr. Orbe to his face, that on the wedding day she shall be in the best humour in the world; and that one cannot go too cheerfully to be married. But the little dissembler does not tell all; I surprized her this morning wiping her eyes, which were red with crying, and I would lay a wager, the tears of the night equal the smiles of the day. She is going to bind herself in new chains, that will relax the gentle ties of friendship: she is entering on a manner of life very different to that which she most affected. Hitherto always pleased and tranquil, she is going to run those hazards which are inseparable from the best marriage; and, whatever face she may assume, I see that, as a clear and smooth water begins to be troubled at the approach of a storm, so her chaste and timid heart feels an alarm at her approaching change of condition.

May they be happy, my dear friend! they love, and will be united in marriage: they will reap the transports of mutual enjoyment without

out obstacles, without fear, without remorse! Adieu, my heart is full—I can write no more.

P. S. We have seen Lord B——, but he was in such haste to proceed on his journey, that he staid with us but a moment. Impressed with a due sense of the obligations we owe him, I would have made him my acknowledgments and yours; but, I know not how, I was ashamed. It is surely a kind of insult offered to his unparalleled generosity to thank such a man for any thing!

L E T T E R LXXXI.

To E L O I S A.

WHAT children does the impetuosity of our passions make of us! how readily does an extravagant affection nourish itself on chimeras; and how easily are our too violent desires prevented by the most frivolous objects! I received your letter with as much rapture as your presence could have inspired: in the excess of my transport, a piece of folded paper supplying in my mind the place of Eloisa. One of the greatest evils of absence, and the only one which reason cannot alleviate, is the inquietude we are under concerning the actual state of the person we love. Her health, her life, her repose, her affections, nothing escapes the apprehensions of him who has every thing to lose. Nor are we more certain of the present condition than of the future; and every possible accident is realized
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in the mind of the timid lover. I breathe, and am alive again. You are in health, and still love me; or rather ten days ago you loved me, and was well; but who can assure me it is so at this instant? How cruel! how tormenting is absence! how fatally capricious is that situation in which we can enjoy only the past moment for the present is not yet arrived.

Had you said nothing about your *constant companion*, I should have detected her little malice in the censures passed on my observations, and her old grudge in the apology for Marini; but, if it be permitted me in turn to apologize for myself, I will not make her wait for a reply.

In the first place then, my dear cousin, for it is to her I should address my answer, as to the stile of my remarks, I have adopted that of the subject: I endeavoured to give you at once both an idea and an example of the mode of conversation in fashion; and thus, following an ancient precept, I wrote to you in the same manner they talk in some companies to each other. Besides, it is not the use of rhetorical figures, but the choice of them, which I blame in Marini. If a man has the least warmth of imagination, he must necessarily use metaphors and figurative expressions to make himself understood. Even your own letters are full of them, without your knowing it; and I will maintain it, that none but a geometrician or a blockhead can talk without metaphor. In effect, the same sentiment may admit of an hundred different degrees of energy; and how are we to determine the precise degree in which to enforce it, but by
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the turn of expression? I must confess I could not myself help smiling at the absurdity of some phrases I used. I thank you for the trouble you took to pick them out. But, let them stand where they are, you will find them clear and peculiarly emphatical. Let us suppose that your two sprightly sparkling eyes, whose language is now so expressive, were separated one from the other, and from the set of features to which they give such lustre; what think you, cousin, they would say, even with all their vivacity and fire? Believe me, they would lose all power of expression; they would be mute even to Mr. Orbe.

Is not the first thing that presents itself to observation in a strange country, the general cast and turn of conversation? And is not this the first observation I made in Paris? I have written to you only what is said, and not what is done in this city. If I remarked a contrast between the discourse, the sentiments, and the actions of the people, it is because the contrast is too striking to escape the most superficial observer. When I see the same persons change their maxims according to the company they frequent, Molinists in one, and Jansenists in another, court sycophants with the minister, and factious grumblers with an anticourtier; when I see a man in lace and embroidery rail at luxury, an officer of the revenue against imposts, or a prelate against gluttony; when I hear a court-lady talk of modesty, a noble Lord of honesty, an author of candour, or an abbé of religion, and see nobody surprized at these absurdities, is it not natural enough to conclude that people here are as little anxious to hear truth

truth as to speak it? And that, so far from endeavouring to persuade others into their own opinion, they care not whether they are believed or not?

But, let this suffice, in the way of pleasantry, for an answer to our cousin. I will lay aside an affectation to which we are all three strangers, and I hope you will find in me for the future as little of the satirist as the wit. And now, Eloisa, let me reply to you; for I am at no loss to distinguish between critical raillery and serious reproaches.

I cannot conceive how both you and your cousin could so egregiously mistake the object of my description. It was not the French in particular, on whom I intended to animadvert. For, if the characters of nations can be determined only by their difference, how can I, who have as yet no acquaintance with any other, pretend to draw the character of this? I should not besides have been so indiscreet as to fix on the metropolis for the place of observation. I am not ignorant that capital cities differ less from each other, than the national characters of the people, which are there in a great measure lost and confounded, as well from the influence of courts, all which bear a great resemblance to each other, as from the common consequence of living in a close and numerous society; which is also every where nearly the same, and prevails over the original and peculiar character of the country.

Were I to study the natural characteristics of a people, I would repair to some of the more distant provinces, where the inhabitants still pursue their natural inclinations. I would proceed
slowly

slowly and carefully through several of those provinces, and those at greatest distance from each other : from the difference I might observe between them, I would then trace the peculiar genius of each province ; from what was theirs in common and not customary to other countries, I would trace the genius of the nation in general ; and what appeared common to all nations, I should regard as characteristics of mankind in general. But I have neither formed so extensive a project ; nor, if I had, am I possessed of the necessary experience to put it in execution. My design is to improve myself in the knowledge of mankind universally, and my method is to consider man in his several relations. I have hitherto been acquainted only with small societies scattered up and down, in a manner alone, and without connections. At present I am in the midst of others, which are surrounded by multitudes on the same spot, from which I shall begin to judge of the genuine effects of society ; for, if men are constantly made better by their association, the more numerous and closely connected they are, still the better they ought to be ; and their manners should be more simple and less corrupted at Paris, than in the Valais ; but if experience prove the contrary, we must draw the opposite conclusion.

This method, I confess, may in time lead to the knowledge of the national characters of people ; but by a route so tedious and indirect, that I may perhaps never be qualified to determine that of any one nation upon earth. I must begin to make my observations on the first country in which I reside, proceeding in the
others

others I pass through to mark the difference between them and the first: comparing France to every other, as we describe an olive-tree by a willow, or a palm-tree by a fir, and must defer the forming my judgment of the first people observed, till I have finished my observations on all the rest.

Please to distinguish then, my charming monitor, between philosophical observation and national satire. It is not the Parisians that I study, but the inhabitants of a great city; and I know not whether the remarks I have made be not as applicable to those of Rome and London, as of Paris. Moral principles do not depend on the customs of a people; so that in spite of their reigning prejudices I can perceive what is wrong in itself: but I know not whether I can justly attribute it to the Frenchman, or the *man*; whether it be the effect of habit, or of nature. Vice is in every place offensive to an impartial eye, and it is no more blameable to reprove it in whatever country it is found, than to correct the failings of humanity, because we live among men. Am not I at present an inhabitant of Paris? perhaps, I may have already unconsciously contributed my share, to the disorders I have remarked: perhaps too long a stay may corrupt even my inclinations, and at the end of a year I may be no more than a Parisian myself; if, in order to be deserving of Eloisa, I do not cherish the spirit of liberty and the manners of a free citizen. Let me proceed therefore, without restraint, in describing objects I should blush to resemble, and in animating my zeal for virtue.

tue by displaying the disgusting pictures of falsehood and vice.

Were my employment and fortune in my own power, I might without doubt make choice of other subjects for my letters. You were not displeased with those I wrote you from Meillerie, and the Valais: but, my dear friend, it is necessary for me, in order to support the noise and hurry of the world, in which I am obliged to live, to console myself in writing to you; and the thoughts of drawing up my narratives for your perusal, should excite me to look out for proper subjects. Discouragement would otherwise overtake me at every step, and I must entirely relinquish my observations on mankind, if you refuse to hear me. Consider that, to live in a manner so little conformable to my taste, I make an effort not unworthy of its cause: and to enable you to judge of what I must undergo to obtain you, permit me to speak sometimes of the maxims I am forced to learn, and the obstacles I am obliged to encounter.

In spite of my slow pace, and unavoidable avocations, my collection was finished when your letter happily arrived to prolong my task of copying: but, I admire, in seeing it so short, how you contrive to say so much in so few words. I will maintain it, there can be no reading so delightful as that of your letters, even to those to whom you are a stranger, if their hearts do but sympathise with ours. But how can you be a stranger to any one who reads your letters? is it possible that a manner so engaging, that sentiments so tender, can belong to any other than Eloisa? your enchanting looks accompany every

every sentence; your charming voice pronounces every word. It is impossible for any other to love, to think, to speak, to act, to write like Eloisa. Be not surprised then if your letters, which so strikingly convey your form and feature, should sometimes have the same effect as your presence on a lover, who so devoutly idolizes your person. I lose my senses in their perusal; my head grows giddy; a devouring flame consumes me; my blood boils, and I become frantic with passion. I fancy I see, I feel, I press you to my heart, adorable object! bewitching beauty! source of rapture and delight! image of those angelic forms, which are the fabled companions of the blessed! come to my arms — she is here — I clasp her in my embrace — ah! no, she is vanished; and I grasp but a shadow. Indeed, my dear friend, you are too charming; you have been too indulgent to the weakness of a heart, that can never forget your charms, nor your tenderness. Your beauty even triumphs in its absence, it pursues me wherever I go, it makes me dread to be alone, and it is my greatest misery that I dare not give myself to the contemplation of so ravishing an object.

Our friends then, I find, will be united in spite of all obstacles; or rather they are so while I am now writing. Amiable and deserving pair! may heaven bestow on them all the blessings their prudent and peaceful affections, innocence of manners, and goodness of heart, deserve! may it bless them with that happiness it is so sparing of to those who were formed by nature to taste its delights! happy indeed will they be, if heaven

ven should grant to them what it has taken from us ! and yet, Eloisa, we may draw some consolation even from our misfortunes. Do you not perceive that our severest troubles are not without their peculiar satisfactions ; and that although our friends may taste pleasures of which we are deprived, we enjoy others of which they are ignorant ? yes, my gentle friend, in spite of absence, losses, fears ; in spite even of despair itself, the powerful exertion of two hearts, longing for each other, is always attended with a secret pleasure unknown to those at ease. This is one of the miracles of love, that teacheth us how to extract pleasure from pain ; and would make us look upon a state of indifference as the greatest of all misfortunes. Though we lament our own situation, then, let us not envy that of others. On the whole, perhaps, there is none preferable to our own : as the deity derives his happiness from himself, the hearts that glow with a celestial passion, find in themselves the source of refined enjoyment, independent of fortune.

L E T T E R LXXXII.

To ELOISA.

AT length, Eloisa, behold me swim with the stream. My collection being finished, I begin to frequent the public diversions, and to sup in company ; I spend the whole day abroad, and am attentive to every striking object : but, perceiving nothing that resembles you, I recollect myself in the midst of noise and confusion,
and

and converse in secret with my love. It is not however, that this busy and tumultuous life has not in it something agreeable, or that such a vast variety of objects do not present a considerable fund of gratification to the curiosity of a stranger: but, to taste the entertainment they afford, the heart should be vacant, and the understanding idle. Both love and reason seem to unite in raising my disgust against such amusement. Every thing here being confined to appearances, which are every instant changing, I have neither the time to be affected with, nor to examine, any thing.

Hence I begin to see the difficulties of studying the world, and indeed I know not what situation is most likely to make me a proficient in this science. The speculatist lives at too great a distance, and the man of business too near the object, to view it critically: the one sees too much to be able to reflect on any part, and the other too little to judge of the whole piece. Every object that strikes the philosopher he examines apart, and, not being able to discern its connections and relations with others, that lie beyond the field of his observation, he never sees them placed in their proper point of view, and knows neither their real causes nor effects. The man of business sees all, and has leisure to think on nothing. The instability of objects permits him barely to perceive their existence, and not to examine their qualities: they pass in succession before him with such rapidity, that they efface the impression of each other, and load his memory only with a chaos of confused ideas. It is also as impossible to make observations, and

meditate on them alternately ; as the scene requires a constant and unremitted attention, which reflection would interrupt. A man who should divide his time by intervals between solitude and society, always perplexed in retirement and to seek in the world, would be able to do nothing in either. There is but one way : and that is to divide the whole period of life into two parts ; applying the one to observation, and the other to reflection. But this is next to impossible ; for reason is not a piece of furniture that can be thrown aside, and put to use again at pleasure : the man who should live ten years without reflection, will never again be capable of it as long as he lives.

I find it is a folly to think to study mankind in the quality of a simple spectator. He, who pretends only to make observations, will be able to observe nothing : for, being useless to the men of business, and troublesome to those of pleasure, he will find no where admittance. We can have the opportunity of seeing others act, in proportion only as we act with them ; in the school of the world, as well as in that of love, we must begin by practising whatever we desire to learn.

What method then can I take ? I that am a stranger, and can follow no employment in this country, and whom even the difference of religion excludes from aspiring to office ? I am reduced to be humble, in order to instruct myself ; and, as I can never be useful, must endeavour to make myself agreeable. To this end, I aim as much as possible to be polite without flattery, complaisant without meanness, and to
put

put so good a face on what is tolerable in society that I may be admitted into it, without being under the necessity of adopting its vices. Every man that would see the world, and has nothing to do in it, ought at least to adopt its manners to a certain degree. For what pretensions can he have to be admitted into the society of people to whom he can be of no service, and to whom he has not the address to make himself agreeable? But, if he has found out this art, it is all that is required of him, particularly if he be a stranger. Such a one has no occasion to take part in their cabals, their intrigues, or their quarrels: if he behaves obligingly to every one; if he neither excludes, nor prefers women of a certain character; if he keeps the secrets of the company into which he is admitted; if he turns not into ridicule at one house, what he sees in another; if he avoids making confidants; entering into broils; and, in particular, if he maintains a certain personal dignity; he may see the world, without molestation, preserve the purity of his manners, his probity, and even his frankness itself, if it arises from a spirit of liberty, and not from that of party. This is what I have endeavoured to do, agreeable to the advice of some people of sense, whom I have chosen for my advisers, among the acquaintance Lord B——'s interest has procured me. In consequence of this, I begin now to be admitted into companies, less numerous and more select. Hitherto I have been chiefly invited to regular dinners, where the only woman at table is the mistress of the family; where open house is kept for all the idle people about Paris, with

whom they have the slightest acquaintance; and where every one pays for his dinner in wit, or flattery, as he can best afford; the conversation being in general noisy and confused, and very much resembling that of a public ordinary.

I am at present initiated into the more secret mysteries of visiting: being invited to private suppers, where the door is shut against all strolling and chance guests, and every one is upon an agreeable footing, if not with each other, at least with the provider of the entertainment. Here it is that the women are less reserved, and their real characters more easily discovered. The conversation is in these parties carried on with more decorum, and is more refined and satirical: instead of talking of the public news, plays, promotions, births, deaths, and marriages, which were the topics of the morning, they here take a review of the several anecdotes of Paris, divulge the secret articles of the scandalous chronicle, turn the good and bad alike into ridicule, and, in artfully describing the characters of others, undesignedly display their own. It is in these companies that the little circumspection which remains has invented a peculiar kind of language, under which they affect to render their satire more obscure, while it only makes it more severe. It is here, in a word, that they carefully sharpen the poniard, under pretence of making it less hurtful; but, in fact, only to make it wound the deeper. To judge, however, of this conversation according to our notions of things, we should be in the wrong to call it satirical; for it consists more of raillery than

than censure, and turns less upon the vicious than the ridiculous.—Satire in general is not common in large cities, where that which is downright wicked is too simple to be worth talking about. What can they condemn where virtue is in no esteem? and what should they revile where nothing is held to be villainous? At Paris, more particularly, where every thing is seen in an agreeable light, the representation of things that ought to raise our indignation is well received, if it be but wrapt up in a song or an epigram. The fine ladies of this country do not like to be displeased; and are therefore displeased at nothing: they love to laugh, but woe be to him who happens to be the subject of their ridicule; the scars this caustic leaves are never to be effaced; they not only defame good manners and virtue, but exaggerate even vice itself. But to return to our company,

What strikes me most in these select meetings, is to see that half a dozen people, expressly chosen to entertain one another agreeably, and between whom there generally subsist very intimate connections, cannot converse an hour together without introducing the affairs of half the people in Paris; just as if their hearts had nothing to say to each other, or that there was no person in company of merit enough to engage their attention. You know, Eloisa, how far otherwise it was with us, when we supped together at your cousin's, or your own apartment; how we could find means, in spite of constraint and secrecy, to turn the discourse on subjects that related to ourselves; how at every

moving reflection, at every subtle illusion, a look more swift than lightening, a sigh rather imagined than perceived, conveyed the pleasing sensation from one heart to the other.

If the discourse here turn by accident on any of the company, it is commonly carried on in a jargon known only to the persons concerned, and which others need a vocabulary to understand. Thus by talking as it were in cypher, they are enabled to banter each other with insipid raillery, in which the greatest blockhead does not always shine the least. In the mean time, perhaps a third part of the company, incapable of taking the jest, are either reduced to a disagreeable silence, or to laugh at what they do not comprehend. Of this kind, Eloisa, is all the tenderness and affection I have observed in the intimacies of this country: those of a more private nature, with only a second person, I have not, nor ever shall have experienced.

In the midst of all this, however, if a man of any weight and consequence should enter on a grave discourse, or begin to discuss a serious question, a general attention would be immediately fixed on this new object: men and women, old and young, every one would be ready to enter into its examination; and it is astonishing how much good sense and precision would, as it were, through emulation, fall out of their extravagant heads*. A point of morality could
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* Provided always that no unforeseen object of pleasantry starts up to disturb their gravity; for in that case, it is laid hold of by every one in a moment, and it is impossible to recal their serious attention

not be better determined in a society of philosophers, than in that of a fine lady at Paris: their conclusions would even be less precise and severe: for the philosopher, who thinks himself obliged to act as he speaks, will be less rigid in his principles; but, where morality is nothing more than a topic of discourse, the severity of it is of no consequence: and no one is displeased at an opportunity of checking philosophical pride, by placing virtue out of its reach.

Besides this, influenced by a knowledge of the world and of their own hearts, all agree in thinking human nature as depraved as possible: hence their philosophy is always of the gloomy cast; they are ever indulging their own vanity by depreciating the virtues of humanity; always accounting for good actions from vicious motives, and attributing to mankind in general the depravity of their own minds.

And yet, notwithstanding their adopting this abject doctrine, one of the favourite topics of these societies is *sentiment*; a word by which we are not to understand the sensation of a heart susceptible of love or friendship: this would be thought vulgar and disgusting. No, sentiment consists in great and general maxims, heightened by the most sublime subtilties of metaphysics. I can safely say that, in my life, I have never
tention. I remember that a handful of gingerbread cakes once ludicrously put an end to a dramatic representation at the fair. The actors were indeed quadrupeds; but how many trifling things are there that would prove gingerbread cakes to some sort of men! it is well known whom Fontenelle intended to describe in his history of the Tyrinthians.

heard so much talk of sentiment, nor ever comprehended so little what was meant by it; so inconceivable are these French refinements! Our simple hearts, Eloisa, never were governed by any of these fine maxims; and I am afraid it is with sentiment in the polite world, as it is with Homer among the pedants, who discover in him a thousand imaginary beauties, for want of taste to point out his real ones. So much sentiment is here laid out in wit, and evaporated in conversation, that none is left to influence their actions. Happily politeness supplies its place, and people act from custom nearly as they would from sensibility: at least so long as it costs them only a few compliments, and such trifling restraints, as they willingly lay themselves under in order to be respected; but, if any considerable sacrifice of their ease or interest is required, adieu to sentiment: politeness does not proceed so far; so far as it goes, however, you can hardly believe how nicely every article of behaviour is weighed, measured; and estimated. What is not regulated by sentiment, is subjected to custom, by which indeed every thing here is governed. These people are all professed copyists; and, though they abound in originals, nobody knows any thing of them, or presumes to be so himself. *To do like other people*, is a maxim of the greatest weight in this country: and *this is the mode—that is not the mode*, are decisions from which there is no appeal.

This apparent regularity gives to the common, and even the most serious transactions of life, the most comical air in the world. They have settled even the very moment when it is proper

proper to send cards to their acquaintance; when to visit with a card, that is, to visit without visiting at all; when to do it in person; when it is proper to be at home; when to be denied; what advances it is proper to make, or reject, on every occasion; what degree of sorrow should be affected at the death of such, or such a one*; how long to mourn in the country; when they may come to console themselves in town; the very day, and even the minute, when the afflicted is permitted to give a ball, or go to the play. Every body in the same circumstances does the same thing: they keep time, and their motions are made all together, like the evolutions of a regiment in battalia; so that you would think them so many puppets, nailed to the same board, or moved by the same wire.

Now, as it is morally impossible that all these people, though they act in the same manner, should be at once equally affected, it is plain, their peculiar characters are not to be known by their actions; it is plain their discourse is only a formal jargon, which assists us less to form a judgment of the French manners in general, than the peculiar mode of conversing in Paris. In like manner, we learn only here their

* To be afflicted at the decease of any person, betrays a sense of humanity, and is a sign of a good disposition, but is no instance of virtue; there being no moral obligation to lament even the death of a father. Whoever in such a case, therefore, is not really afflicted, ought not to affect the appearance of it; for it is more necessary always to avoid deceit, than to comply with custom.

terms of conversation, but nothing by which we can judge of their estimation in the conduct of life. I say the same of most of their writings; and even of their theatrical representations; the stage, since the time of Moliere, being a place where they rather repeat agreeable dialogues, than give a representation of life and manners. There are here three theatres; on two of which they only introduce imaginary characters; such as Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Scaramouch, on the one; and, on the other, gods, devils, and conjurers. On the third, they represent those immortal dramas, which give us so much pleasure in reading, and other new pieces, which are from time to time written for the stage; many of which are tragical, but not affecting. And, though the sentiments contained in them are sometimes natural, and well enough adapted to the human heart, they give us not the least light into the peculiar manners of the people to whom they afford entertainment.

The institution of tragedy was originally founded on religion, whose sanction was sufficient to establish its authority. Besides this, the tragic scene always presented to the Greeks an instructive and agreeable representation, either in the misfortunes of the Persians their enemies, or in the vices and follies of the kings from which they themselves were delivered. Should they represent in like manner at Berne, at Zurich, or at the Hague, the ancient tyranny of the house of Austria, the love of liberty and their country would make such a representation peculiarly interesting to the spectators: but I

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would

would be glad to know of what use are the tragedies of Corneille at Paris; and what interest its citizens can take in the fate of a Pompey or Sertorius. The Greek tragedies turned upon real events, or such as were supposed to be real, being founded on historical tradition. But what business has a refined heroic passion in the breasts of the great? the conflicts of love and virtue cause them, no doubt, many an unhappy day and sleepless night! the heart is doubtless vastly concerned in the marriages of kings! judge then of the probability and use of so many performances all turning on such imaginary subjects.

As to comedy, it should certainly be a lively representation of the manners of the people for whom it is written; that it may serve them as a mirror to shew them their vices and follies. Terence and Plautus mistook their subjects; but their predecessors, Aristophanes and Menander, displayed Athenian manners before an Athenian audience; and since these, Moliere, and Moliere only, has represented still more ingenuously in France the manners of the French in the last age.

The objects of the picture are since changed; but they have never since had so faithful, so masterly a painter. At present, they only copy on the theatre the manner of conversing in about an hundred families in Paris; and this is their representation of French manners: so that there are in this great city five or six hundred thousand persons, whose various characters are never introduced on the stage. Moliere described the shopkeeper and artizan, as well as the Marquis; Socrates introduces the discourses of coachmen, car-

penters, shoemakers, and masons. But our present writers, quite of another stamp, think it beneath them to know what passes in a trader's counting-house or the shop of a mechanic: their dramas must consist of persons of the first quality; for by the grandeur of their characters, they aim at a degree of eminence they never could attain by the force of genius. Nay, the audience itself is become so very delicate, that the chief of the spectators are as jealous of place and precedents in going to a play as in making a visit, never condescending to be present at the representation of characters of inferior condition.

Indeed, the people of fashion here are considered by themselves as the only inhabitants of the earth; all the rest of mankind are nothing. All the world keep a coach, a Swiss and a *Maitre d' Hotel*: all the world, therefore, consists of a very small number of people. Those who walk afoot are nobody; they are your common people, human creatures, the vulgar, folks in short of another world: so that a coach is not so necessary to carry one about, as to give one a title to existence. And hence there is a handful of impertinent people, who look upon themselves as the only beings of any consequence in the universe: though, were it not for the mischief they occasion, they themselves would not deserve to be numbered with the rest of mankind. It is nevertheless solely for these people that theatrical entertainments are made. They are represented by fictitious characters in the middle of the theatre, and shew themselves in real ones on each side; they are at once persons of the drama on the stage, and comedians in the boxes. It is

is thus the sphere of the world and genius is contracted, while the present dramatic writers absurdly affect to introduce only characters of imaginary importance. No man is worthy of being brought upon the stage that does not wear a laced coat. A stranger would hence be apt to think France peopled only by counts and marquises, altho' in fact, the more miserable and beggarly its inhabitants grow, the more splendid and brilliant is their representation on the theatre; and hence it is, that the ridiculous behaviour of persons of rank, in being exposed on the stage, rather gains ground than diminishes, and that the common people, who are ever aping the rich, go less to the theatre to laugh at their follies than to study them, and to become by imitation greater fools than the originals.

The French are indebted even to Moliere in a great measure for this evil; he corrected the courtiers by spoiling the citizens, and his ridiculous marquises were the first model of those still more contemptible petit-maitres, which succeeded them in the city.

There is in general much discourse and but very little action on the French stage: the reason of which is, perhaps, that the French talk much more than they do, or at least that they pay a much greater regard to what is said than to what is done. I remember the answer of a spectator, who, in coming out from the representation of one of the pieces of Dionysius the tyrant, was asked what he had seen? *I have seen nothing*, said he, *but I have heard a deal of talk*. The same might be said of the French plays. Racine and Corneille, with all their genius, are no more
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than talkers, and their successor is the first of all the French poets, who, in imitation of the English, has sometimes ventured to bring scenes of action on the stage. In common, their plays consist only of witty, or florid dialogues well disposed; where it is obvious the chief design of the speakers is to display their talents of wit and elocution. In the mean time, almost every sentiment is delivered in the stile of a general maxim. However transported they may be with passion, they always preserve their respect to the publick, of whom they think more constantly than of themselves: the pieces of Racine and Moliere excepted*, egotism is excluded as scrupulously from the French drama, as from the writings of mesieurs de Port-Royal; and the passions of the human heart never speak, but with all the modesty of christian humility in the third person. There is besides a certain affected dignity in theatrical discourse and action, which never permits the passions to be expressed in their natural language, or suffers the writer to divest himself of the poet and attend to the scene of action, but binds him constantly down to the theatre and the audience. Hence the most critical situations, the most interesting circumstances of the piece, never make him forget the nicest arrangement of phrase or

* Moliere ought not to be ranked here with Racine: the first indeed abounds with maxims and sentimental observation, like all the others, especially in his versified pieces: but in Racine all is sentimental; he makes every character speak for the author, and is in this point truly singular among all the dramatic writers of his nation.

elegancies of attitude. Should even despair plunge a dagger in the heart of his hero, not contented that, like Polixenes, he should observe a decency in falling, he would not even let him fall: for the sake of decency he is supported bolt upright after he is dead: and continues as erect after he expired as before.

The reason of all this is, that a Frenchman requires on the stage neither nature nor deception, but only wit and sentiment: he requires only to be diverted, and cares not whether what he sees be a true or false representation of nature. No body here goes to the theatre for the pleasure of seeing the play, but for the sake of seeing, and being seen by the company, and to catch a subject for conversation after the play is over. The actor with them is always the actor, never the character he represents. He who gives himself those important airs of a universal sovereign is not the emperor Augustus, it is only Baron. The relict of Pompey is no other than Adrienne, Alzira is mademoiselle Gauffin, and that formidable savage is no other than the civil Grandval. The comedians, on the other hand, give themselves no trouble to keep up an illusion, which no body expects. They place the venerable heroes of antiquity between six rows of young, spruce Parisians: they have their Roman dresses made up in the French fashion: the weeping Cornelia is seen bathed in tears, with her rouge laid on two fingers thick: Cato has his hair dressed and powdered, and Brutus struts along in a Roman hoop-petticoat; yet no body is shocked at all this absurdity, nor doth it hinder the success of the piece; for, as the actors
only

only are seen in the characters, so what respects the author is the only thing considered in the play; and, though propriety should be entirely neglected, it is easily excused, for every one knows that Corneille was no taylor, nor Crebillion a peruke-maker.

Thus, in whatever light we view this people, all is verbosity and jargon, talk without design, and words without meaning. In the theatre, as in the world, be as attentive as ye will to what is said, you will learn nothing of what is done; when a man has spoken, it would be thought impertinent to enquire after his conduct: he has spoken, that's sufficient, and he must stand or fall by what he has said. The respectable man here is not he that does good actions, but he that says good things; and a single sentence sometimes inadvertently uttered shall cast an odium on a man's character, which forty years of integrity will not be able to erase. In a word, although the conduct of men does not always resemble their discourse, yet I see they are characterized by their discourse without any regard to their actions: I have remarked also, that in a great city, society appears more free, agreeable, and even more safe, than among people less knowing and less civilized: but I will not pretend to say the latter are therefore less humane, temperate, or just. On the contrary, among the former, where every thing is governed by appearances the heart is perhaps more hid by external shew, and lies deeper concealed, under agreeable deceptions. It does not, however, belong to me, who am a stranger, without business, pleasures or connections, to decide here. I begin, nevertheless, to perceive in
myself

myself that intoxication into which such a busy tumultuous life plunges every one who leads it ; and am affected with a dizziness like that of a man, before whose eyes a multitude of successive objects pass with rapidity. Not one of these, which thus strike me, affects my heart ; but all together they so disturb and suspend its affections, that I sometimes forget not only myself, but even my Eloisa. Every day, on leaving my apartment, I leave my *observations* locked up behind me, and proceed to make others on the frivolous objects which present themselves. Insensibly I begin to think and reason in the manner of other people ; and, if ever I strive to get the better of their prejudices, and look upon things as they are, I am immediately borne down by a torrent of words, which carry with them a shew of reason. The people here will prove to a demonstration, that none but superficial, half-witted reasoners regard the reality of things ; that the true philosopher considers only their appearances ; that prejudice and prepossession should pass for principle, decorum for law, and that the most profound wisdom consists in living like fools.

Thus constrained to pervert the order of the moral affections, to set a value on chimeras, and put nature and reason to silence, I see with regret, how sullied and defaced is that divine image, which I cherish in my breast, once the sole object of my desires, and the only guide of my conduct : I am borne by one caprice to another, while my inclinations are continually enslaved by the general opinion, and I am never certain one day what I shall approve the next.

Abashed,

Abashed and confounded to find my humanity so far debased; to see myself fallen so low from that innate greatness of mind, to which our passion had reciprocally elevated us, I return home at night, with a heart swelling, yet vacant as a ball puffed up with air; sickened with disgust, and sunk in sorrow. But with what joy do I recollect myself, when alone! with what transports do I feel the sensations of love again take possession of my heart, and restore me to the dignity of a man! O love! how refined are thy sensations! how do I applaud myself when I see the image of virtue preserve its lustre still in my breast; when I contemplate thine, my Eloisa! still there, unsullied, sitting on a throne of glory, and dissipating in a moment my gloomy delusions. I feel my depressed soul revive; I seem to recover my existence, to live anew, and to regain, with my love, those sublime sentiments that render the passion worthy of its object.

L E T T E R LXXXII.

From E L O I S A.

I AM just returned, my dear friend, from the enjoyment of one of the most delightful sights I shall ever behold. The most prudent, the most amiable girl in the world is at length become the most deserving, the best of women. The worthy man, to whom she has given her hand, lives only to revere, to cherish, to make her happy; and I feel that inexpressible pleasure of being a witness to the happiness of my friend,
and

and of sharing it with her: nor will you, I am convinced, partake of it less than myself; you, for whom she had always the tenderest esteem, who were dear to her almost from her infancy, and have received from her obligations which should render her yet more dear to you. Yes, we will sympathize with all her sensations; if to her they give pleasure they shall afford us consolation; for, so great is the value of that friendship which unites us, that the happiness of either of the three is sufficient to moderate the afflictions of the other two. Let us not, however, too highly felicitate ourselves; our incomparable friend is going in some measure to forsake us. She is now entered on a new scene of life, is bound by new engagements, and become subject to new obligations. Her heart, which once was only ours, will now find room for other affections, to which friendship must give place. We ought therefore my friend to be more scrupulous hereafter in the services we impose on her zeal; we ought not only to consult the sincerity of her attachment, and the need we have of her service, but what may with propriety be required in her present situation; what may be agreeable or displeasing to her husband. We have no business to enquire what virtue demands in such a case, the laws of friendship are sufficient. He, who for his own sake could expose his friend, deserves not to have one. When ours was unmarried, she was at liberty; she had no body to call her to account for her conduct, and the uprightness of her intentions was sufficient to justify her to herself. She considered us as man and wife, destined for each other; and, her chaste
yet

yet susceptible heart, uniting a due regard for herself to the most tender compassion for her culpable friend, she concealed my fault without abetting it: but at present, circumstances are changed; and she is justly accountable to the man, to whom she has not only plighted her vows, but resigned her liberty. She is now entrusted not only with her own honour, but with that of her husband; and it is not enough that she is virtuous, her virtue must be respected, and her conduct approved: She must not only *deserve* the esteem of her husband, but she must *obtain* it: if he blames her, she is to blame: and tho' she be innocent, she is in the wrong the moment she is suspected; for to study appearances, is an indispensable part of her duty.

I cannot determine precisely how far I am right in my judgment; I leave that to you: but there is a monitor within that tells me it is not right, my cousin should continue to be my confidant; not that she should be the first to tell me so. I may be frequently mistaken in my arguments, but I am convinced I am always right in the sensations on which they are founded; and this makes me confide more in these sensations than on the deductions of my reason.

From this consideration, I have already formed a pretence to get back your letters, which, for fear of a surprise I had put into her hands. She returned them with an oppression of heart, which that of mine made me easily perceive; and which convinced me I had acted as I ought. We entered into no explanation, but our looks were

were sufficiently expressive; she embraced me, and burst into tears: the tender sensibility of friendship hath little occasion for the assistance of language.

With respect to the future address of your letters, I thought immediately of my little Anet, as the safest; but if this young woman be inferior in rank to my cousin, is that a reason we should less regard her virtue? have I not reason, on the contrary, to fear my example may be more dangerous to one of less elevated sentiments; that what was only an effort of the sublimest friendship in one, may be the first step to corruption in the other; and that, in abusing her gratitude, I may make virtue itself subservient to the promotion of vice? is it not enough, alas! for me to be culpable, without seducing accomplices, and aggravating my own crime, by involving others in my guilt? of this, therefore, no more: I have hit on another expedient, less safe indeed, but less exceptionable, as it lays nobody open to censure, nor requires a confident. It is for you to write to me under a fictitious name; as for example, that of Mr. Bosquet, and to send your letters under cover addressed to Regianino, whom I shall take care to instruct. Thus Regianino himself may know nothing of our correspondence, or at most can only form suspicions, which he dares not confirm; for Lord B——, on whose favour he depends, has answered for his fidelity. In the mean time, while our correspondence is maintained by this means, I will try if it be possible to resume the method we made use of in your voyage to the Valois,

Valois, or some other that may be durable and safe.

There is something in the turn and style of your letters, that would convince me, were I even unacquainted with the state of your heart, that the life you lead at Paris is in no wise agreeable to your inclinations. The letters of Muralt, of which they so loudly complain in France, are even less satyrical and severe than yours. Like a child that is angry with its tutors, you revenge the disagreeable necessity you are under of studying the world, upon your first teachers.

What I am surprized at the most, however, is, that the very circumstance, which usually prejudices foreigners in favour of the French, should give you disgust. I mean their polite reception of strangers, and their general turn of conversation; tho' by your own confession, you have met with great civility. I have not forgot your distinction between Paris in particular, and great cities in general; but I see plainly, that, without knowing precisely what belongs to either, you censure without considering whether it be truth or slander. But, however, this be, the French are my favourites, and you don't at all oblige me in reviling them. It is to the many excellent writings France has produced, that I am indebted for most of those lessons, by which we have together profited. If Switzerland is emerged from its antient barbarity, to whom is it obliged? the two greatest and most virtuous men in modern story, Catinat and Fénélon, were both Frenchmen. Henry the fourth, the good king, whose character I admire, was a French-

Frenchman. If France be not the country of liberty, it is properly that of *men*; a superior advantage in the eyes of a philosopher to that of licentious freedom. Hospitable, protectors of the stranger, the French overlook real insult, and a man would be pelted in London for saying half so much against the English, as the French will bear at Paris. My father, who hath spent the greatest part of his life in France, never speaks but with rapture of this agreeable people.

If he has spilt his blood in the service of its king, he has not been forgotten in his retirement, but is still honoured by royal beneficence. Hence, I think myself in some degree interested in the glory of a nation, to which that of my father is indebted. If the people of all countries, my friend, have their good and ill qualities, you ought surely to pay the same regard to that impartiality which praises, as to that which blames them.

To be more particular with you, I will ask you why you throw away in idle visits the time you are to spend at Paris? Is not Paris a theatre, wherein great talents may be displayed, as well as London? and do strangers find more difficulties in the way to reputation in the former, than they do in the latter? Believe me, all the English are not like Lord B——, nor do all the French resemble those fine talkers that give you so much disgust. Try, put them to the proof, tho' it be only to acquire a more intimate acquaintance with their manners; and judge of people, that you own speak so well, by their deeds. My cousin's father says, you know the constitution of the empire, and the interests of
princes.

princes. My Lord B—— acknowledges also, that you are well versed in the principles of politics, and the various systems of government: and I have got it into my head that of all countries in the world you will succeed best in that where merit is most esteemed, and that you want only to be known, to be honourably employed. As to your religion's being an obstacle, why should yours be more so than another's? is not good sense a security against fanaticism and persecution? does bigotry prevail more in France than in Germany? and is there any thing that should hinder your succeeding at Paris, as Mr. St. Saphorin has done at Vienna? if you consider the end, the more speedy your attempts, the sooner may you promise yourself success. If you balance the means, it is certainly more reputable for a man to advance himself by his own abilities, than to be obliged for preferment to his friends. But, if you purpose a longer voyage——ah! that *sea!*——I should like England better if it lay on this side Paris.—— But, a-propos, now I talk of Paris, may I venture to take notice of another piece of affectation, I have remarked in your letters? how comes it that you, who spoke to me so freely of the women of this country, say nothing about the Parisian ladies? can those celebrated and polite females be less worth your description, than the simple and unpolished inhabitants of the mountains? or are you apprehensive of giving me uneasiness by a picture of the most charming and seductive creatures in the universe? If this be the case, my friend, undeceive yourself, and rest assured, that the worst thing you can

can do for my repose is to say nothing about them; and that, however, you might praise them, your silence in that respect is more suspicious than would be your highest encomiums. I shall be glad also to have some little account of the opera at Paris, of which they relate such wonders*; for after all, the music may be bad, and yet the representation have its beauties; but if not, it will at least afford a subject for your criticism, which will offend no body.

I know not whether it be worth while to tell you, that my cousin's wedding produced me two suitors; they met here a few days ago; one of them from Yverdun, hunting all the way from castle to castle, and the other from Germany, in the stage-coach from Berne. The first is a kind of smart, that speaks loud and peremptory enough to make his repartees pass for wit, among those who attend only to his manner. The other is a great bashful simpleton, whose timidity, however, is not of that amiable kind which arises from the fear of displeasing; but is owing to the embarrassment of a blockhead, who knows not what to say, and the awkwardness of a libertine who is at a loss how to behave himself in the company of modest women. As I well know the intentions of my father in regard to these two

* I should have but a bad opinion of the reader's sagacity, who, knowing the character and situation of Eloisa, should think this piece of curiosity hers. It will be seen hereafter that her lover knew to whom to attribute it. If he could have been deceived in this point, he had not deserved the name of a lover.

gentlemen, I took, with pleasure, the freedom he gave me, of treating them agreeable to my own humour, which, I believe, is such as will soon get the better of that which brought them hither. I hate them for their presumption, in pretending to a heart which is yours, without the least merit to dispute it with you; yet if they had ever so much, I should hate them the more; but where could they acquire it? they or any other man in the universe? no, my dear friend, rest satisfied, it is impossible. Nay, were it possible that another should be possessed of equal merit, or even that another *you* should attack my heart, I should never listen to any but the first. Be not uneasy, therefore, at these two animals, which I have with regret condescended to mention. What pleasure should I have in being able to give them both such equal portions of disgust, as that they should resolve to depart both together as they came!

M. de Croufaz has lately given us a refutation of the ethic epistles of Mr. Pope, which I have read, but it did not please me. I will not take upon me to say which of these two authors is in the right, but I am conscious that the book of the former will never excite the reader to do any one virtuous action, while our zeal for every thing great and good is awakened by that of Pope. For my own part, I have no other rule by which to judge of what I read, than that of consulting the dispositions in which I rise up from my book, nor can I well conceive what sort of merit any piece has to boast, the reading of which leaves no benevolent impression behind it, nor stimulates

stimulates the reader to any thing that is virtuous and good *.

Adieu, my dear friend, I would not finish my letter so soon, but am called away. I leave you with regret, for I am at present in a chearful disposition, and I love you should partake of my happiness. The cause which now inspires it is, that my dear mother is much better within these few days; she has indeed found herself so well as to be present at the wedding, and to give away her niece, or rather her other daughter. Poor Clara wept for joy to see her; and I — but you may judge of my sensations, who, deserving her so little, hourly tremble at the thoughts of losing her. In fact, she did the honours of the table, and acquitted herself on the occasion with as good a grace as if she had been in perfect health. Nay, it seemed to me that some remains of languor in her disposition rendered her elegant complacences still more affecting. Never did this incomparable parent appear so good, so charming, so worthy to be revered! — Do you know that she asked Mr. Orbe concerning you several times? Although she never speaks of you to me, I am not ignorant of her esteem for you; and that if ever she were consulted, your happiness and mine would be her first concern. Ah! my friend, if your heart can be truly grateful, you owe her many, many obligations!

* If the reader approves of this criterion, and makes use of it to judge of this work, I will not appeal from his judgment, whatever it prove.

L E T T E R LXXXIV.

To E L O I S A.

WELL, my Eloisa, scold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will endure every thing, but will not cease to acquaint you with my thoughts. Who should be the depositary of those sentiments you have enlightened, and with whom should my heart converse, if you refuse to hear me? I give you an account of the observations I have made, and of my own opinions, not so much for your approbation, as correction; and the more liable I am to fall into error, the more punctual I should be in my application to your judgment. If I censure the manners of the people in this great city, I do not seek to be justified for taking this liberty, because I write to you in confidence; for I never say any thing of a third person, which I would not aver to his face; and all I write to you concerning the Parisians, is no more than a repetition of what I daily advance in conversation with themselves: however, they are not displeased with me, and they even join with me in many particulars. They complain of our *Muralt*; I am persuaded, they see, and are convinced, how much he hated them, even in his panegyricks; but, I am much mistaken, if, in my criticism they do not perceive the contrary. The esteem and gratitude their generosity inspires, serve to increase my freedom; it may be serviceable to some of them, and, if I may judge from their manner of receiving truth from my lips, they do not think

me

me below their regard. When this is the case, my Eloisa, true censure is more laudable than even true praise; for that only serves to corrupt the heart of those on whom it is bestowed, and there are none so eager to obtain it as the most worthless; on the contrary, censure may be useful, and can only be endured by the most deserving. I sincerely own, I honour the French as the only people in the world who really love their fellow-creatures, and who are naturally benevolent; but, for this very reason, I am less inclined to grant them that general admiration they seem to expect, even for the faults they acknowledge. If the French had no virtues, I should not mention them; if they had no vices they would not be men: they have too many excellent qualities for indiscriminate praise.

As to the attempts you mention, they are impracticable, because I should be obliged to use means which are not only inconvenient, but which you have also interdicted. Republican austerity is not in vogue here; they need more flexible virtues, which are more easily adapted to the interest of their friends or patrons. They respect merit, I confess, but the talents that acquire reputation are very different from those which lead to fortune; and, if I am so unfortunate as to possess the latter only, will Eloisa consent to become the wife of an adventurer? In England it is quite the contrary, and though their manners are perhaps less refined than in France, yet they rise to fortune by more honourable steps, because the people having more share in the government, public esteem is of more consequence. You are not ignorant of

what Lord B — proposed to do for me, and of my intention to justify his zeal. I can have no objection to any spot on the globe except its distance from you. O Eloisa! if it is difficult to procure your hand, it is still more difficult to deserve so great a blessing, and yet, methinks, 'tis a noble task.

The account you give of your mother's health, relieved me from the greatest anxiety. I perceived your distress, even before my departure, and therefore I durst not express my fears; but I thought her so changed, that I was apprehensive she would fall into some dangerous illness. Be careful of her, because she is dear to me, because my heart reveres her, because all my hopes are centered in her goodness, and because she is the mother of my Eloisa.

As for the two suitors, I own, I do not like to hear of them, even in jest; but the manner in which you mention them expels my fears, and I will no longer hate these unfortunate pretenders, since you imagine they are hated by you: yet I admire your simplicity in believing yourself capable of hatred. Don't you perceive that what you take for hatred, is nothing more than the impatience of insulted love? thus anxious mourns the amorous turtle when its beloved mate is in danger of being caught. No, Eloisa, no, incomparable maid! when you are capable of hatred, I may cease to love you.

P. S. Beset by two importunate rivals! how I pity you! for your own sake, hasten their dismissal.

L E T.

L E T T E R LXXXV.

From ELOISA.

I HAVE delivered into Mr. Orbe's hands a packet which he has engaged to forward to M. Sylvestre, from whom you will receive it; but I caution you, my dear friend, not to open it, till you retire into your own chamber, and are quite alone. You will find in this packet a small trinket for your particular use.

'Tis a kind of charm which lovers gladly wear. The manner of using it is very whimsical. It must be contemplated for a quarter of an hour every morning, or until it softens the spectator into a certain degree of tenderness. It is then applied to the eyes, the mouth, and next to the heart: and it is generally esteemed the best preservative against the noxious air of a country infected with gallantry. They even attribute an electrical quality to these talismans, which is very singular, but which acts only upon faithful lovers. They say it communicates the impression of kisses from one to the other, though at the distance of a hundred leagues. I do not pretend to warrant the success of this charm from experience; only, this I know, it is your own fault if you do not put it to the proof.

Calm your fears with regard to my two gallants, or pretenders, call them which you please. They are gone: peace be with them; I shall no longer hate them, since they are out of my sight.

L E T T E R LXXXVI.

To E L O I S A.

AND so, my Eloisa, you insist on a description of these Parisian ladies? vain girl! but it is a homage due to your charms. Notwithstanding all your affected jealousy, your modesty, and your love, I have discovered more vanity than fear disguised under this curiosity. Be it as it will, I shall be just; I may safely speak the truth; but I should undertake the task with better spirits if I had more to praise. Why are they not a hundred times more lovely! would they had sufficient charms, to reflect new excellence upon yours by the comparison!

You complain of my silence: good heaven! what could I have written? when you have read this letter, you will perceive why I take pleasure in speaking of your neighbours, the Valesian ladies, and why I have hitherto neglected to mention those of this country: the first continually remind me of you, my Eloisa, but the others — read, and you will know. Few people think of the French ladies as I do, if indeed, I am not quite singular in my opinion. Equity obliges me therefore to give you this hint, that you may suppose I delineate them, perhaps, not as they are in reality, but as they appear to me. Nevertheless, if I am not just in my description, I know you will censure me; and then will your injustice be greater than mine, because the fault is entirely your own.

Let

Let us begin with their exterior qualities; the greatest number of observers proceed no farther; should I follow their example, the women in this country would have great cause to be dissatisfied: they have an *exterior* character as well as an *exterior* face; and, as neither one or the other is much to their advantage, it would be unjust to form our opinions of them from either. Their figure, for the most part, is only tolerable, and in general rather indifferent than perfect; yet there are exceptions. They are slender rather than well-made, and therefore they gladly embrace the fashions which disguise them most; but, I find that in other countries, the women are foolish enough to imitate these fashions, though contrived merely to hide defects which they have not.

Their air is easy and natural, their manner free and unaffected, because they hate all restraint; but they have a certain † *dismvoluta*, which, though it is not intirely destitute of grace, they frequently carry, even to a degree of absurdity. Their complexion is moderately fair, and they are commonly pale, which does not in the least add to their beauty. With regard to their necks, they are in the opposite extreme to the Valesians. Conscious of this defect, they endeavour to supply it by art; nor are they less scrupulous of borrowing an artificial whiteness. Though I have never seen these objects but at a distance, they expose so much of themselves, that they leave the spectators very little room for conjecture. In this case, these ladies

† Freedom, ease.

seem not to understand their own interest; for if the face is but moderately handsome, the imagination heightens every concealed charm, and according to the gascon philosopher, there is no appetite so strong as that which was never satisfied, especially in this sense.

Their features are not very regular, but they have something in their countenance which supplies the place of beauty, and which is sometimes much more agreeable. Their eyes are quick and sparkling, yet they are neither penetrating nor sweet: they strive to animate them by the help of rouge, but the expression they acquire by this means, has more of anger in it than love; nature has given them sprightliness only, and though they sometimes seem to solicit tenderness, they never promise a return †.

They have acquired so great a reputation for their judgment in dress, that they are patterns to all Europe. Indeed, it is impossible to adapt such absurd fashions with more taste. They are, of all women, the least under subjection to their own modes. Fashion governs in the provinces, but the Parisians govern fashion, and every one of them is skilled in suiting it to her own advantage: the first are ignorant and servile plagiarists, who copy even orthographical errors; the latter are like authors, who imitate with judgment, and have abilities to correct the mistakes of their original.

† Speak for yourself, my dear philosopher, others may have been more happy. A coquet only, promises to every body, what she should reserve but for one.

Their

Their apparel is more uncommon than magnificent, more elegant than rich. The rapid succession of their fashions renders them old and obsolete even from one year to another: that neatness which induces them to change their dress so frequently, preserves them from much ridiculous magnificence; they do not however spend less money on that account, but their expences are, by this means, better conducted. They differ greatly in this particular from the Italians; instead of superb trimmings and embroidery, their cloaths are always plain and new. Both sexes observe the same moderation and delicacy, which is extremely pleasing: for my part I like to see a coat neither laced nor soiled. There is no nation in the world, except our own, where the people, especially the women, wear less gold and silver. The same kind of stuffs are worn by people of all ranks, so that it would be difficult to distinguish a duchess from a citizen, if the first had not some marks of distinction which the other dares not imitate. But this seems to have its inconveniences; for whatever is the fashion at court, is immediately followed in the city, and you never see in Paris, as in other countries, a beau or belle of the last age. Nevertheless, it is not here as in most other places, where the people of the highest rank, being also the richest, the women of fashion distinguish themselves by a degree of luxury which cannot be equalled. Had the ladies of the court of France attempted this kind of distinction, they would very soon have been eclipsed by the wives of the citizens.

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What then do you think was their resource? why they took a much more effectual method, and which required more abilities. They knew that the minds of the people were deeply impressed with a sense of bashfulness and modesty. This suggested to them fashions not to be easily imitated. They perceived that the people could not endure the thoughts of *rouge*, and that they obstinately persisted in calling it by the vulgar name of paint, and therefore they daubed their cheeks, not with paint, but with *rouge*; for change but the name, and 'tis no longer the same thing. They also perceived that a bare neck was scandalous in the eyes of the public; and, for that reason, they chose to enlarge the scene. They saw — many things, which my Eloisa, young as she is, will never see. In their manners they are governed exactly by the same principle. That charming diffidence which distinguishes and adorns the sex, they despise as ignoble and vile; they animate their actions and discourse with a noble assurance, and, I am confident, they would look any modest man out of countenance. Thus they cease to be women, to avoid being confounded with the vulgar; they prefer their rank to their sex, and imitate women of pleasure that they themselves may be above imitation.

I know not how far they may have carried *their* imitation, but I am certain they have not succeeded in their design to prevent it in others. As to *rouge*, and the fashion of displaying those charms, which they ought to conceal, they have made all the progress possible. The ladies of the city had much rather renounce their natural

tural complexion; and the charms they might borrow from the * *amoroſo penſier* of their lovers, than preſerve the appearance of what they are: and if this example has not prevailed among the lower ſort of people, it is only becauſe they are afraid of being inſulted by the populace; and thus are an infinite number of women kept within the bounds of decency, by the fear of offending the delicacy of the mob. Their maſculine air, and dragoon-like deportment is leſs ſtriking becauſe ſo univerſal; it is conſpicuous only to ſtrangers. From one end of this metropolis to the other there is ſcarce a woman whoſe appearance is not ſufficiently bold to diſconcert any man who has never been accuſtomed to the like in his own country; from this aſtoniſhment proceeds that aukward confuſion which they attribute to all ſtrangers, and which increaſes the moment they open her lips. They have not the ſweet voice of our country-women; their accent is hoarſe, ſharp, interrogative, imperious, jibing, and louder than that of a man. If, in the tone of their voice, they retain any thing feminine, it is intirely loſt in the impertinence of their manner. They ſeem to enjoy the baſhful confuſion of every foreigner; but it would probably give them leſs pleaſure, if they were acquainted with its true cauſe.

Whether it be, that I, in particular, am prejudiced in favour of beauty, or whether the power of beauty may not univerſally influence the judgment, I know not; but the handſomeſt women appear to me, rather the moſt decent in

* Amorous imagination.

their dress, and in general, behave with the greatest modesty. They lose nothing by this reserve; conscious of their advantages, they know they have no need of borrowed allurements to attract our admiration. It may be also, that impudence is more intolerably disgusting when joined with ugliness; for certainly, I should much sooner be tempted to affront an impertinent ugly woman, than to embrace her; whereas, by modesty, she might excite, even a tender compassion, which is often a harbinger of love. But, though it is generally remarked, that the prettiest women are the best behaved, yet they are often so extremely affected, and are always so evidently taken up with themselves, that, in this country, there is little danger of being exposed to that temptation which M. de Muralte sometimes experienced amongst the English ladies, of telling a woman she was handsome, only for the pleasure of persuading her to think so.

Neither the natural gaiety of the French, nor their love of singularity, is the cause of this freedom of conversation and behaviour for which these ladies are so remarkable; but it is rather to be deduced from their manners, by which they are authorized to spend all their time in the company of men; and hence it is, that the behaviour of each sex seems to be copied from the other.

Our Swiss ladies, on the contrary, are fond of little female assemblies, in which they are extremely social and happy *; for, though they

* Things are changed since that time. By many circumstances one would suppose these letters to have

probably may not dislike the company of men; yet it is certain their presence is some constraint upon them.

In Paris it is quite the reverse; the women are never easy nor satisfied without the men. In most companies, the lady of the house is seen alone amidst a circle of gentlemen, and this is so generally the case, that one cannot help wondering how such an unequal proportion of men can be every where assembled. But Paris is full of *avanturiers*, priests and abbés, who spend their whole lives in running from house to house. Thus the women learn to think, act and speak from the men, whilst these, in return, imbibe a certain degree of effeminacy; and this seems the only consequence of their trifling gallantry: however, they enjoy a sulsome adoration, in which their devotees do not think it worth while to preserve even the appearance of sincerity. No matter: in the midst of her circle, every woman is the sole object of attention, and that's sufficient. But, if a second female enters the room, familiarity instantly gives place to ceremony, the high airs of quality are assumed, the adoration becomes divided, and each continues to be a secret constraint upon the other till the company breaks up.

The Parisian ladies are fond of public diversions: that is, they are fond of shewing themselves in public; but the great difficulty, every time they go, is to find a female companion, for

have been written above twenty years ago; but by their stile, and the manners they describe, one would conclude them to be of the last century.

decorum

decorum will not allow one lady alone to appear in the boxes, even though attended by her husband, or by any other man. It is amazing, in this very social country, how difficult it is to form these parties; out of ten that are proposed, nine generally miscarry: they are projected by the desire of being seen, and are broken by the disagreeable necessity for a sister petticoat. I should imagine it an easy matter for the ladies to abolish this ridiculous custom. What reason can there be why a woman should not be seen alone in public? perhaps, there being no reason for it, is the very cause of its continuance. However, upon the whole, it may be prudent to preserve decency where the abolition would be attended with no great satisfaction. What great matter would there be in the privilege of appearing alone at the opera? is it not much better to reserve this exclusive privilege for the private reception of one's friends in one's own house?

Nothing can be more certain than that this custom of being alone amidst such a number of men, is productive of many secret connexions; indeed the world is pretty well convinced of it, since experience has proved the absurdity of that maxim, which told us, that by multiplying temptations we should destroy them; so that they do not defend this fashion for its decency, but because it is most agreeable; which, by the by, I do not believe. How can any love exist, where modesty is held in derision? and what pleasure can there be in a life which is at once deprived both of love and decency? but as the want of entertainment is the greatest evil which these slaves to dissipation have to fear, the ladies are solicitous
for

for amusement rather than love; gallantry and attendance is all they require, and provided their dangles are assiduous, they are very indifferent about the violence or sincerity of their passion. The words *love* and *lover* are entirely banished even from the most private intercourse of the sexes, and are sunk into oblivion with the *darts* and *flames* of ancient romance.

One would imagine that the whole order of natural sensations was here reversed. A girl is to have no feelings, passions, or attachments; that privilege is reserved for the married women, and excludes no paramour except their husbands. The mother had better have twenty lovers, than her daughter one. Adultery is considered as no crime, and conveys no indecency in the idea: their romances, which are universally read for instruction, are full of it, and there appears nothing shocking in its consequences, provided the lovers do not render themselves contemptible by their fidelity. O Eloisa! there are many women in this city, who have defiled their marriage-bed a hundred times, yet would presume, with the voice of impurity, to slander an union like ours, that is yet unfulfilled with infidelity.

It should seem that in Paris, marriage is a different institution from what it is in other parts of the world: they call it a sacrament, and yet it has not half the power of a common contract. It appears to be nothing more than a private agreement between two persons to live together, to bear the same name, and acknowledge the same children; but who, in other respects, have no authority one over the other.

If

If at Paris a man should pretend to be offended with the ill conduct of his wife, he would be as generally despised, as if, in our country, he was to take no notice of her scandalous behaviour. Nor are the ladies on their parts less indulgent to their husbands; for I have not yet heard of an instance of their being punished for having imitated the infidelity of their wives. In short, what other effect can be expected from an union in which their hearts were never consulted? those who marry fortune or title, seem to be under no personal obligation.

Love, even love, has lost its privilege, and is no less degenerated than marriage. As man and wife may be looked upon as a bachelor and a maid, who live together for the sake of enjoying more liberty; so are lovers a kind of people, who, with great indifference, meet for amusement, through custom, or out of vanity. The heart is entirely unconcerned in these attachments, in which nothing more than certain external conveniencies are ever consulted. It is, in short, to know each other, to dine together, now and then to exchange a few words, or, if possible, even less than this. An affair of gallantry lasts but a little longer than a visit, and consists chiefly in a few genteel conversations, and three or four pretty letters, filled with descriptions, maxims, philosophy, and wit. As to experimental philosophy, it does not require so much mystery; they have wisely discovered the folly of letting slip any opportunity of gratification: whether it happens to be the lover or any other man, a man is a man, and why should a lady be more scrupulous of being guilty
of

of an infidelity to her lover than to her husband? after a certain age they may all be considered as the same kind of puppets, made up by the same fashion-monger, and consequently the first that comes to hand is always the best.

Knowing nothing of these matters from experience, I can relate only what I have heard; and indeed, the representation is so very extraordinary, that I have but an imperfect idea of what I have been told. That which I chiefly comprehend is, that the gallant is generally regarded as one of the family; that if the lady happens to be dissatisfied with him, he is dismissed, or if he meets with a service more to his inclination or advantage, he takes his leave, and she engages a fresh one. There are, I have been told, some ladies so capricious as even to take up with their own husbands for a while, considering them, at least, as a kind of male creature; but this whim seldom lasts long; as soon as it is past, the good man is entirely discarded, or, if he should happen to be obstinate, why then she takes another and keeps them both.

But I could not help objecting to the person who gave me this strange account, how it was possible, after this, to live among these discarded lovers. Live among them, says he, why, they are entire strangers to her ever after; and if they should, by chance, take it into their heads to renew their amours, they would have to begin anew, and would hardly be able to recollect their former acquaintance. I understand you, said I, but I have some difficulty in reconciling these extravagancies. I cannot conceive,

ceive, how it is possible, after such a tender union, to see each other without emotion; how the heart can avoid palpitation, even at the name of a person once beloved; why they do not tremble when they meet. You make me laugh, says he, with your tremblings: and so you would have our ladies continually fainting away.

Suppress a part of this caricature representation; place my Eloisa in opposition to the rest, and remember the sincerity of my heart: I have nothing more to add.

However, I must confess, that many of these disagreeable impressions are effaced by custom. Though the dark side of their character may first catch our attention, it is no reason why we should be blind to their amiable qualities. The charms of their understanding and good humour are no small addition to their personal accomplishments. Our first repugnance overcome frequently generates a contrary sentiment. It is not just to view the picture only in its worst point of sight.

The first inconveniency of great cities is, that mankind are generally disguised, and that in society they appear different from what they really are. This is particularly true in Paris with regard to the ladies, who derive from the observation of others, the only existence about which they are solicitous. When you meet a lady in publick, instead of seeing a Parisian, as you imagine, you behold only a phantom of the fashion: her stature, dimension, gait, shape, neck, colour, air, look, language, every thing is assumed; so that, if you were to see her in her natural state, you would not know her to be the

the same creature. But this universal mask is greatly to her disadvantage; for nature's substitutes are always inferior to herself: besides, it is almost impossible to conceal her entirely; in spite of us, she will now and then discover herself, and in seizing her with dexterity consists the true art of observation. This is indeed no difficult matter in conversing with the women of this country, for, if you take them off their grand theatre of representation, and consider them attentively, you will see them as they really are, and it is then possible that your aversion may be changed into esteem and friendship.

I had an opportunity of verifying this remark last week, on a party of pleasure, to which, along with some other strangers, I was, abruptly enough, invited by a company of ladies, probably with a design to laugh at us without constraint or interruption. The first day the project succeeded to their wish: they immediately began to dart their wit and pleasantry in showers, but as their arrows were not retorted, their quivers were soon empty. They then behaved with great decency, and finding themselves unable to bring us to *their* style, they were obliged to conform to ours. Whether they were pleased with it or not I am ignorant; however, the change was very agreeable to me, for I soon found that I stood a better chance to profit by the conversation of these females, than from the generality of men. Their wit now appeared so great an ornament to their natural good sense, that I changed my opinion of the sex, and could not help lamenting, that so many amiable women should want reason, only because it is their
humour

humour to reject it. I perceived also that their natural graces began insensibly to efface the artificial airs of the city: for, without design, our manner is generally influenced by the nature of our discourse: it is impossible to introduce much coquettish grimace in a rational conversation. They appeared much more handsome after they grew indifferent about it, and I perceived, that if they pleased they need only throw off their affectation. Hence, I am apt to conclude, that Paris, the pretended seat of taste, is of all places in the world, that in which there is the least; since all their methods of pleasing are destructive of real beauty.

Thus we continued together four or five days, satisfied with each other, and with ourselves. Instead of satirising Paris and its innumerable follies, we forgot both the city and its inhabitants. Our whole care was to promote the happiness of our little society. We wanted no ill-natured wit or sarcasm to excite our mirth, but our laughter, like your cousin's, was the effect of good humour.

I had yet another reason to be confirmed in my good opinion of these females. Frequently in the very midst of our enjoyment, a person would come in abruptly and whisper the lady of the house. She left the room, shut herself up in her closet, and continued writing a considerable time. It was natural to suppose, that her heart was engaged in this correspondence; and of this one of the company gave a hint, which, however, was not very graciously received; a proof at least, that though she might possibly have no lovers, she was not without friends. But, judge of my surprize, when I was informed that
these

these supposed Parisian suitors were no other than the unhappy peasants of the parish, who came in their distress to implore the protection of their lady; one being unjustly taxed, another enrolled in the militia, regardless of his age and family, a third groaning under a lawsuit with a powerful neighbour, a fourth ruined by a storm of hail, was going to be dragged to prison. In short, each had some petition to make, each was patiently heard, and the time we supposed to be spent in an amorous correspondence, was employed in writing letters in favour of these unhappy sufferers. It is impossible to conceive how I was astonished to find with what delight, and with how little ostentation, this young, this gay woman, performed these charitable offices of humanity. Were she even an Eloisa, thought I, she could not act otherwise! From that moment I continued to regard her with respect, and all her faults vanished.

My enquiries had no sooner taken this turn, than I began to discover a thousand advantageous particulars in the very women who before appeared so unsupportable. Indeed all strangers are agreed, that, provided you exclude the fashionable topic, there is no country in the world whose women have more knowledge, talk more sensibly, with more judgment, and are more capable of giving advice. If from the Spanish, Italian, or German ladies, we should take the jargon of gallantry and wit, what would there remain of their conversation? and you, my Eloisa, are not ignorant how it is in general with our country-women. But if, with a French woman,

woman, a man has resolution to sacrifice his pretensions to gallantry, and to draw her out of that favourite fortress, she will then make a virtue of necessity, and arming herself with reason, will fight manfully in the open field. With regard to their goodness of heart, I will not instance their zeal to serve their friends; for, as with the rest of mankind, that may partly proceed from self-love. But though they generally love no body but themselves, long habit will frequently produce in them the effects of a sincere friendship. Those who have constancy enough to support an attachment of ten years, commonly continue it to the end of their lives, and they will then love their old friends with more tenderness, at least with more fidelity than their new lovers.

One common accusation against the women of France is, that they do every thing, and consequently more evil than good; but it may be observed in their justification, that in doing evil they are stimulated by the men, and in doing good are actuated by their own principles. This does not in any ways contradict what I said before, that the heart has no concern in the commerce between the two sexes; for the gallantry of the French has given to the women an universal power, which stands in no need of tenderness to support it. Every thing depends upon the ladies; all things are done by them or for them; Olympus and Parnassus, glory and fortune, are equally subject to their laws. Neither books nor authors have any other value or esteem than that which the ladies are pleased to allow them. There is no appeal from their decree

decree in matters of the nicest judgment or most trivial taste. Poetry, criticism, history, philosophy, are all calculated for the ladies, and even the bible itself has lately been metamorphosed into a polite romance. In public affairs, their influence arises from their natural ascendancy over their husbands, not because they are their husbands, but because they are men, and it would be monstrous for a man to refuse any thing to a lady, even though she were his wife.

Yet this authority implies neither attachment nor esteem, but merely politeness and compliance with custom; for it is as essential to French gallantry to despise the women as to oblige them; and this contempt is taken as a proof, that a man has seen enough of the world to know the sex. Whoever treats them with respect is deemed a novice, a knight-errant, one who has known woman only in romances. They judge so equitably of themselves, that to honour them is to forfeit their esteem; so that the principal requisite in a man of gallantry is superlative impertinence.

Let the ladies of this country pretend what they will, they are, in spite of themselves, extremely good-natured. All men who are burthened with a multiplicity of affairs, are difficult of access, and without commiseration; and in Paris, the centre of business of one of the most considerable nations in Europe, the men of consequence are particularly obdurate: those, therefore, who have any thing to ask, naturally apply to the ladies, whose ears are never shut against the unhappy; they console and serve them. In the midst of all their frivolous diffi-

pation, they do not scruple to steal a few moments from their pleasures, and devote them to acts of benevolence; and though there may be some women mean enough to make an infamous traffic of their services, there are hundreds, on the contrary, who are daily employed in charitably assisting the distressed. However, it must be confessed, that they are sometimes so indiscreet, as to ruin an unfortunate man they happen not to know, in order to serve their own friend. But how is it possible to know every body in so extensive a country? or how can more be expected from good-nature destitute of real virtue, whose sublimest effort is not so much to do good, as to avoid evil? After all, it must be allowed that their inclinations are not naturally bad; that they do a great deal of good; that they do it from their hearts; that they alone preserve the remains of humanity, which is still to be found in Paris; and that without them, we should see the men avaritious and insatiable, like wolves devouring each other.

I should have remained ignorant of all this, if I had not consulted their comedies and romances, whose authors are, perhaps, too apt to stumble upon those foibles from which they themselves are not exempt, rather than the virtues they happen not to possess; who, instead of encouraging their readers by praising their real virtues, amuse themselves with painting imaginary characters too perfect for imitation.

Romances are perhaps the last vehicle of instruction that can be administered to a corrupt people. It were to be wished that none were suffered

suffered to prepare this medicine but men of honest principles and true sensibility; authors, whose writings should be a picture of their own hearts; who, instead of fixing virtue in the heavens, beyond the reach of our nature, would, by smoothing the way, insensibly tempt us out of the gulph of vice.

But to return to the Parisian ladies; concerning whom, I do not by any means agree in the common opinion. They are universally allowed to have the most enchanting address, the most seducing manner; to be the most refined coquets, to possess the most sublime gallantry, and the art of pleasing to a superlative degree. For my part, I think their address shocking, their coquettish airs disgusting, and their manner extremely immodest. I should imagine that the heart would shrink back at all their advances, and I can never be persuaded, that they can for a single moment, talk of love, without shewing themselves incapable of either feeling or inspiring that tender passion.

On the other hand, we find them represented as frivolous, artful, false, thoughtless, inconstant, talking well, but without reflection or sentiment, and evaporating all their merit in idle chit-chat. But to me, all this appears to be as external as their *rouge* or their hoop-petticoats. There are a kind of fashionable vices, which are supposed necessary at Paris, but which are not incompatible with sense, reason, humanity and good-nature. These ladies are, in many cases, more discreet, and less given to tattling than those of any other country. They are better instructed, and the things they are taught have a stronger

effect upon their judgment. In short, if I dislike them for having disfigured the proper characteristics of their sex, I esteem them for those virtues in which they resemble us; and, my opinion is, that they are better calculated to be men of merit, than amiable women.

One word more, and I have done. If Eloisa had never been, if my heart had been capable of any other attachment than that for which it was created, I should never have taken a wife or mistress in Paris; but should gladly have chosen a friend, and such a treasure might possibly have consoled me for the want of the others *.

LETTER LXXXVII.

To ELOISA.

SINCE the receipt of your letter, I have been daily with Mr. Silvester, to see after the packet you mentioned: but my impatience has been seven times disappointed. At length, however, on the eighth time of going, I received it; and it was no sooner put into my hands, than, without staying to pay the postage, even without asking what it came to, or speaking a word to any body, I ran with it out of doors; and, as if I had been out of my senses, passed

* I shall not give my opinion of this letter; but I doubt much, whether a judgment which allows them the qualities they despise, and denies them those which they value, will be pleasing to the French ladies.

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passed by the door of my lodgings, though it stood open before me, and traversed a number of streets that I knew nothing of, till in about half an hour I found myself at the farther end of Paris. I was then obliged to take a hackney-coach in order to get the more speedily home, which is the first time I have made use of those conveniencies in a morning; indeed it is with regret I use them even in an afternoon, to pay some distant visits; for my legs are good, and I should be sorry that any improvement in my circumstances should make me neglect the use of them.

When I was seated in the coach, I was a good deal perplexed with my packet; as you had laid your injunctions on me to open it nowhere but at home. Besides, I was unwilling to be subject to any interruption while I was indulging myself in that exquisite satisfaction, I find in every thing that comes from you. I held it therefore with an impatience and curiosity which I could scarce contain: endeavouring to discover its contents through the covers, by pressing it every way with my hands; from the continual motions of which you would have thought the packet contained fire, and burned the ends of my fingers. Not but that from its size, weight, and the contents of your former letter, I had some suspicion; but then, how could I conceive you to have found either the opportunity or the artist? but what I then could not conceive, is one of the miracles of almighty love: the more it surpasses my conception, the more it enchants my heart, and one of the greatest pleasures it gives me

arises from my ignorance in the manner in which you could effect it.

Arrived at length at my lodgings, I flew to my chamber, locked the door, threw myself, out of breath, into a chair, and with a trembling hand broke open the seal. It was then, Eloisa, I felt the first effect of this powerful talisman. The palpitations of my heart increased at every paper I unfolded; till coming to the last, I was forced to stop and take breath a moment, before I could open it. It is open — my suggestions are true, — it is so, — it is the portrait of Eloisa. — O, my love! your divine image is before me; I gaze with rapture on your charms! my lips, my heart, pay them the first homage, my knees bend. — Again, my eyes are ravished with your heavenly beauties. How immediate, how powerful, is their magical effect! no, Eloisa, it requires not, as you pretend, a quarter of an hour to make itself perceived; a minute, an instant suffices, to draw from my breast a thousand ardent sighs, and to recall, with thy image, the remembrance of my past happiness. Ah! why is the rapture of having such a treasure in possession allayed with so much bitterness? how lively is the representation it gives me of days that are no more! I gaze on the portrait, I think I see Eloisa, and enjoy in imagination those delightful moments, whose remembrance embitters my present hours; and which heaven in its anger bestowed on me only to take them away. Alas! the next instant undeceives me; the pangs of absence throb with increased violence, after the agreeable delusion is vanished; and

and I am in the state of those miserable wretches, whose tortures are remitted only to render them the more cruel. Heavens! what flames have not my eager eyes darted on this unexpected object! how has the sight of it roused in me those impetuous emotions, which used to be effected by your presence! O, my Eloisa, were it possible for this talisman to affect your senses with the phrenzy and illusion of mine — But why is it not possible? why may not those impressions, which the mind darts forth with such rapidity, reach as far as Eloisa? Ah, my charming friend! wherever you are, or however you are employed, at the time I am writing, at the time your portrait receives the same homage I pay to the idol of my soul, do you not perceive your charming face bedewed with tears? do you not sympathize with me in love and sorrow? do you not feel the ardour of a lover's kisses on your lips, your cheeks, your breast? do you not glow all over with the flame imparted from my burning lips? — Ha! what's that? — some body knocks — I will hide my treasure — an impertinent breaks in upon me, — accursed be the cruel intruder, for interrupting me in transports so delightful, — may he never be capable of love, — or may he be doomed to pine in absence, like me.

LETTER LXXXVIII.

To Mrs. ORBE.

IT is to you, dear cousin, I am to give an account of the French opera; for although you have not mentioned it in your own letters, and Eloisa has kept your secret in hers, I am not at a loss to whom to attribute that piece of curiosity. I have been once at the opera to satisfy myself, and twice to oblige you, but am in hopes, this letter will be my excuse for going no more. If you command me, indeed, I can bear it again; I can suffer, I can sleep there, for your service; but to remain awake and attentive is absolutely impossible.

But, before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will give you an account of what they say of it here; the opinion of the connoisseurs may perhaps rectify mine, where I happen to be mistaken. The French opera passes at Paris for the most pompous, the most delightful, the most wonderful entertainment that was ever effected by the united efforts of the human genius. It is said to be the most superb monument of the magnificence of Louis the fourteenth. In fact, every one is not so much at liberty, as you imagine, to give his opinion on so grave a subject. Every thing may be made a point of dispute here, except musick and the opera; but with respect to these, it may be dangerous not to dissemble one's thoughts, as the French musick is supported by an inquisition.

sition no less arbitrary than severe. Indeed, the first lesson which strangers are taught, is, that foreigners universally allow that nothing in the whole world is so fine as the opera at Paris. The truth is, discreet people are silent upon this topic, because they dare not laugh, except in private.

It must be allowed, however, that they represent at the opera, at a vast expence, not only all the wonderful things in nature, but many others still more wonderful, and which nature never produced. For my part, I cannot help thinking Mr. Pope meant this theatre, where he said, one might see gods, devils, monsters, kings, shepherds, and fairies, all mixt together in one scene of confusion.

This assemblage, so magnificent and well-conducted, is regarded by the spectators as if all the things and characters exhibited were real. On seeing the representation of a heathen temple, they are seized with a profound reverence; and, if the goddesses be tolerably pretty, half the men in the pit are immediately Pagans.

Here the audience is not so nice as at the French comedy. Those very spectators, who could not there consider the player as the character he represented, cannot, at the opera consider him any otherwise. It seems as if they were shocked at a rational deception, and could give into nothing but what was grossly absurd; or perhaps they can more easily conceive players to be gods than heroes. Jupiter being of another nature, people may think of him as they please; but Cato was a man, and how few men are

there, who, to judge from themselves, have any reason to think such a man as Cato ever existed.

This opera is not composed, therefore, as in other places, of a company of mercenaries, hired to furnish out an entertainment for the public. It is true, they are paid by the public, and it is their business to attend the opera: but the nature of it is quite changed by its becoming a royal academy of musick, a sort of sovereign tribunal that judges without appeal in its own cause, and is not very remarkable for justice and integrity. Thus you see, how much in some countries the essence of things depends on mere words, and how a respectable title may do honour to that which least deserves it.

The members of this illustrious academy are not degraded by their profession: in revenge, however, they are excommunicated, which is directly contrary to the custom of all other countries: but, perhaps, having had their choice, they had rather live honourably and be damned, than, as plebeians, go vulgarly to heaven. I have seen a modern chevalier, on the French theatre, as proud of the profession of a player, as the unfortunate Laberius was formerly mortified at it, although the latter was forced into it by the commands of Cæsar, and recited only his own works*. But then our degraded an-
cient

* Obliged by the tyrant to appear on the stage, he lamented his disgrace in some very affecting verses,

cient could not afterwards take his place in the circus among the Roman knights; whilst the modern one found his every day at the French comedy, among the first nobility in the kingdom. And I will venture to say, never did they talk at Rome with so much respect of the majesty of the Roman people, as they do at Paris, of the majesty of the opera.

This is what I have gathered chiefly from conversation about this splendid entertainment; I will now relate to you what I have seen of it myself.

Imagine to yourself the inside of a large box, about fifteen feet wide, and long in proportion:

verses, which justly irritated every honest mind against Cæsar. *After having lived, said he, sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning, a Roman knight, but shall return to it this evening an infamous stage-player. Alas! I have lived a day too long. O fortune! if it was my lot to be thus once disgraced, why did you not force me hither while youth and vigour had left me at least an agreeable person: but now, what a wretched object do I present to the insults of the people of Rome? a feeble vice, a weak body, a mere corpse, an animated skeleton, which has nothing left of me but my name.* The entire prologue which he spoke on this occasion, the injustice done him by Cæsar, who was picqued at the noble freedom with which he avenged his offended honour, the affront he received at the circus, the meanness of Cicero in upbraiding him, with the ingenious and satyrical reply of Laberius, are all preserved by Aulus Gellius, and compose, in my opinion, the most curious and interesting piece in his whole collection: which is, for the most part, a very insipid one.

this box is the stage; on each side are placed skreens, at different distances, on which the objects of the scene are coarsely painted. Beyond this is a great curtain, bedaubed in the same manner; which extends from one side to the other, and is generally cut through, to represent caves in the earth, and openings in the heavens, as the perspective requires. So that, if any person, in walking behind the scenes, should happen to brush against the curtain, he might cause an earthquake so violent as to shake — our sides with laughing. The skies are represented by a parcel of bluish rags, hung up with lines and poles, like wet linen at the washer-woman's. The sun, for he is represented here sometimes, is a large candle in a lanthorn. The chariots of the gods and goddesses are made of four bits of wood, nailed together in the form of a square, and hung up by a strong cord, like a swing: across the middle is fastened a board, on which the deity sits a-straddle; and in the front of it hangs a piece of coarse canvass, bedaubed with paint, to represent the clouds that attend on this magnificent car. The bottom of this machine is illuminated by two or three stinking, unsnuffed candles, which, as often as the celestial personage bustles about and shakes his swing, smoke him deliciously, with incense worthy such a divinity.

As these chariots are the most considerable machines of the opera, you may judge by them of the rest. A troubled sea is made of long rollers covered with canvass or blue paper, laid

parallel and turned by the dirty understrappers of the theatre. Their thunder is a heavy cart, which rumbles over the floor, and is not the least affecting instrument of their agreeable music. The flashes of lightning are made by throwing powdered rosin into the flame of a link; and the falling thunderbolt is a cracker at the end of a squib.

The stage is provided with little square trap doors; which, opening on occasion, give notice that the infernal dæmons are coming out of the cellar. And when they are to be carried up into the air, they substitute dextrously in their room little devils of brown canvass stuffed with straw, or sometimes real chimney-sweepers, that are drawn up by ropes, and ride triumphant through the air till they majestically enter the clouds, and are lost among the dirty rags I mentioned. But what is really tragical is, that when the tackle is not well managed, or the ropes happen to break, down come infernal spirits and immortal gods together, and break their limbs and sometimes their necks. To all this I shall add their monsters; which certainly make some scenes very pathetick, such as their dragons, lizards, tortoises, crocodiles, and great toads, all which stalk or crawl about the stage with a threatening air, and put one in mind of the temptation of St. Anthony; every one of these figures being animated by a looby of a Savoyard, that has not even sense enough to play the brute.

Thus you see, cousin, in what consists, in a great degree, the splendid furniture of the opera; at least, thus much I could observe from the pit,

pit, with the help of my glass; for you must not imagine these expedients are much hid, or produce any great illusion: I only tell you here what I saw, and what every other unprejudiced spectator might have seen as well as myself. I was told, nevertheless, that a prodigious quantity of machinery is employed to effect all these motions, and was several times offered a sight of it; but I was never curious to see in what manner extraordinary efforts were made to produce insignificant effects.

The number of people engaged in the service of the opera is inconceivable. The orchestra and chorus together consist of near an hundred persons: there is a multitude of dancers, every part being doubly and triply supplied†, that is to say, there is always one or two inferior actors ready to take the place of the principal, and who are paid for doing nothing, 'till the principal is pleased to do nothing in his turn, and which is seldom long before it happens. After a few representations, the chief actors, who are personages of great consequence, honour the publick no more with their presence in that piece, but give up their parts to their substitutes, or to the substitutes of those substitutes. They receive always the same money at the door; but the spectator does not always meet with the same entertainment. Every one takes a ticket, as he does in the lottery, without knowing

† They know nothing of this in Italy; the publick would not suffer it, and thus the entertainment is subject to less expence: it would cost too much to be thus ill-served.

what will be his prize; but, be what it will, no body dares complain; for you are to know, that the honourable members of this academy owe the publick no manner of respect, it is the publick which owes it to them.

I will say nothing to you of their musick, because you are acquainted with it. But you can have no idea of the frightful cries, and hideous bellowings with which the theatre resounds during the representation. The actresses throwing themselves into convulsions as it were, rend their lungs with squeaking: in the mean time, with their fists clenched against their stomach, their heads thrown back, their faces red, their veins swelled, and their breasts heaving, one knows not which is most disagreeably affected, the eye or the ear. Their actions make those suffer as much who see them, as their singing does those who hear them; and yet what is inconceivable is, that these howlings are almost the only thing the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands, one would imagine them a parcel of deaf people, delighted to be able to hear the voice now and then strained to the highest pitch, and that they strove to encourage the actors to repeat their efforts. For my part, I am persuaded that they applaud the squeaking of an actress at the opera, for the same reason as they do the tricks of a tumbler or posture-master at the fair: it is displeasing and painful to see them; one is in pain while they last, but we are so glad to see all pass off without any accident, that we willingly give them applause.

Think how well this manner of singing is adapted to express all the soft and tender writings

of Quinault. Imagine the muses, loves, and graces, imagine Venus herself expressing her sentiments in this delicate manner, and judge of the effects. As to their devils, let us leave their musick to something infernal enough to suit it. As also that of their magicians, conjurers, and witches; all which, however, meets with the greatest applause at the French opera.

To these ravishing sounds, as harmonious as sweet, we may very deservedly join those of the orchestra. Conceive to yourself a continual clashing of jarring instruments, attended with the drawling and perpetual groans of the base, a noise the most doleful and insupportable that I ever heard in my life, and which I could never bear a quarter of an hour together without being seized with a violent head-ach. All this forms a species of psalmody, which has commonly neither time nor tune. But when, by accident they hit on an air a little lively, the feet of the audience are immediately in motion, and the whole house thunders with their clattering. The pit in particular, with much pains and a great noise, always imitate a certain performer in the orchestra*. Delighted to perceive for a moment that cadence which they so seldom fell, they strain their ears, voice, hands, feet, and in short, their whole body to keep that time, which is every moment ready to escape them. Instead of this the Italians and Germans, who are more easily affected with the measures of their musick, pursue them without any effort, and have never any occasion to beat time: at least, Regianino

• *Le bucheron.*

has

has often told me, that, at the opera in Italy, where the musick is so affecting and lively, you will never see, or hear, in the orchestra or among the spectators, the least motion of either hands or feet. But in this country every thing serves to prove the dulness of their musical organs; their voices are harsh and unpleasing, their tones affected and drawling, and their transitions hard and dissonant: there is no cadence nor melody in their songs; their martial instruments, the fises of the infantry, the trumpets of their cavalry, their horns, their hautboys, the ballad-fingers in the streets, and the fiddlers in their publick-houses, all have something so horribly grating as to shock the most indelicate ear*. All talents are not bestowed on the same men, and the French in general are of all the people in Europe those of the least aptitude for musick. Lord B — pretends that the English have as little, but the difference is, that they know it, and care nothing about the matter, whereas the French give up a thousand just pretensions, and will submit to be censured in any other point whatever, sooner than admit they are not the first musicians in the world. There are even people at Paris who look upon the cultivation of musick as the concern of the state, perhaps because the improvement of Timotheus's lyre was so at Sparta. However this be, the opera here may, for aught I know, be a good political institution, in that it pleases persons of taste no better. But to return to my description.

* The light airs of the French musick have not been unaptly compared to a cow's cawant, or the hobblings of a fat goose attempting to fly.

The

The *ballets*, which are the most brilliant parts of the opera, considered of themselves, afford a pleasing entertainment, as they are magnificent and truly theatrical ; but, as they enter into the composition of the piece, it is in that light we must consider them.

You remember the operas of Quinault ; you know in what manner the diversions are there introduced ; it is much the same, or rather worse with his successors. In every act, the action of the piece is stopt short, just at the most interesting period, by an interlude which is represented before the actors, who are seated on the stage, while the audience in the pit are kept standing. From these interruptions it frequently happens, that the characters of the piece are quite forgotten, and always that the spectators are kept looking at actors, that are looking at something else. The fashion of these interludes is very simple. If the prince is in a good humour, it partakes of the gaiety of his disposition, and is a dance ; if he is displeased, it is contrived in order to bring him to temper again, and it is a dance. I know not whether it be the fashion at court to make a ball for the entertainment of the king, when he is out of humour ; but this I know, with respect to our opera kings, that one cannot sufficiently admire their stoical firmness and philosophy, in sitting so tranquil to see comic dances and attend to songs, while the fate of their kingdoms, crowns and lives, is sometimes determined behind the scenes. But they have besides many other occasions for the introduction of dances ; the most solemn actions of human life are here performed in a dance. The parsons dance, the
soldiers

soldiers dance, the gods dance, the devils dance, the mourners dance at their funerals, and in short all their characters dance upon all occasions.

Dancing is thus the fourth of the fine arts employed in the constitution of the lyric drama: the other three are arts of imitation; but what is imitated in dancing? nothing. — It is therefore foreign to the purpose, for what business is there for minuets or rigadoons in a tragedy? nay, I will venture to say, dancing would be equally absurd in such compositions, though something was imitated by it: for of all the dramatic unities the most indispensable is that of language or expression; and an opera made up partly of singing, partly of dancing, is even more ridiculous than that in which they sing half French half Italian.

Not content to introduce dancing as an essential part of the composition, they even attempt to make it the principal, having operas, which they call *ballets*, and which so badly answer their title, that dancing is no less out of character in them than in all the rest. Most of these ballets consist of as many different subjects as acts; which subjects are connected together by certain metaphysical relations, of which the spectator would never form the least suspicion or conjecture, if the author did not take care to advise him of it in the prologue. The seasons, ages, senses, elements, are the subjects of a dance; but I should be glad to know what propriety there is in all this, or what ideas can by this means be conveyed to the mind of the spectator? some of them again are purely allegorical, as the *carnival*, the *folly*,

folly, and are the most intolerable of all, because with a good deal of wit and finesse, they contain neither sentiment, description, plot, business, nor any thing that can either interest the audience, set off the musick to advantage, flatter the passions, or heighten the illusion. In these pretended ballets the action of the piece is performed in singing, the dancers continually finding occasion to break in upon the singers, tho' without meaning or design.

The result of all this, however, is, that these ballets, being less interesting than their tragedies, these interruptions are little remarked. Were the piece itself more affecting, the spectator would be more offended; but the one defect serves to hide the other, and, in order to prevent the spectators being tired with the dancing, the authors artfully contrive it so that they may be more heartily tired with the piece itself.

This would lead me insensibly to make some enquiries into the true composition of the lyric drama, but these would be too prolix to be comprised in this letter; I have therefore written a little dissertation on that subject, which you will find inclosed, and may communicate to Regianino. I shall only add, with respect to the French opera, that the greatest fault I observed in it is a false taste for magnificence; whence they attempt to represent the marvellous, which, being only the object of imagination, is introduced with as much propriety in an epic poem, as it is ridiculously attempted on the stage. I should hardly have believed, had not I seen it, that there could be found artists weak enough to attempt an imitation of the chariot of the sun, or spectators so childish

childish as to go to see it. Bruyere could not conceive how so fine a sight as the opera could be tiresome. For my part, who am no Bruyere, I can conceive it very well, and will maintain, that to every man who has a true taste for the fine arts, the French musick, their dancing, and the marvellous of their scenery put together, compose the most tiresome representation in the world. After all, perhaps the French do not deserve a more perfect entertainment, especially with respect to the performance: not because they want ability to judge of what is good, but because the bad pleases them better. For, as they had rather censure than applaud, the pleasure of criticising compensates for every defect, and they had rather laugh after they get home, than be pleased with the piece during the representation.

L E T T E R LXXXIX.

From ELOISA.

YES, I see it well: Eloisa is still happy in your love, the same fire that once sparkled in your eyes, glows throughout your last letter, and kindles all the ardour of mine. Yes, my friend, in vain doth fortune separate us; let our hearts press forward to each other, let us preserve by such a communication, their natural warmth against the chilling coldness of absence and despair; and let every thing that tends to loosen the ties of our affections, serve only to draw them closer and bind them more fast.

You

You will smile at my simplicity, when I tell you, that since the receipt of your letter, I have experienced something of those charming effects therein mentioned, and that the jest of the talisman, although purely my own invention, is turned upon myself and become serious. I am seized a hundred times a-day, when alone, with a fit of trembling, as if you were before me. I imagine you are gazing on my portrait, and am foolish enough to feel, in conceit, the warmth of those embraces, the impression of those kisses you bestow on it. Sweet illusion! charming effects of fancy; the last resource of the unhappy. Oh, if it be possible, be to us a pleasing reality! you are yet something to those who are deprived of real happiness.

As to the manner in which I obtained the portrait, it was indeed the contrivance of love; but, believe me, if mine could work miracles, it would not have made choice of this. I will let you into the secret. We had here some time ago a miniature painter, on his return from Italy: he brought letters from Lord B——, who perhaps had some view in sending him. Mr. Orbe embraced this opportunity to have a portrait of my cousin; I was desirous of one also. In return, she and my mother would each have one of me, of which the painter at my request took secretly a second copy. Without troubling myself about the original, I chose of the three that which I thought the most perfect likeness, with a design to send it to you. I made but little scruple, I own, of this piece of deceit; for, as to the likeness of the portrait, a little more or less can make no great difference with my mother and
cousin;

cousin; but the homage you might pay to any other resemblance than mine, would be a kind of infidelity, by so much the more dangerous, as my picture might me handsomer than me; and I would not, on any account, that you should nourish a passion for charms I do not possess. With respect to the drapery, I could have liked to have been not so negligently dressed; but I was not heard, and my father himself insisted on the portrait's being finished as it is. Except the head-dress, however, nothing of the habit was taken from mine, the painter having dressed the picture as he thought proper, and ornamented my person with the works of his own imagination.

L E T T E R X C.

To ELOISA.

I Must talk to you still, my dear Eloisa, of your portrait; no longer, however, in that rapturous strain which the first sight of it inspired; and with which you yourself were so much affected; but, on the contrary, with the regret of a man deceived by false hopes, and whom nothing can recompence for what he has lost. Your portrait, like yourself, is both graceful and beautiful; it is also a tolerable likeness, and is painted by the hand of a master; but to be satisfied with it I ought never to have known you.

The first fault I find in it is, that it resembles you, and yet is not yourself; that it has your likeness, and is insensible. In vain the painter thought

thought to copy your features; where is that sweetness of sentiment that enlivens them, and without which, regular and beautiful as they are, they are nothing? your heart, Eloisa, no painting can imitate. This defect, I own, should be attributed to the imperfection of the art; but it is the fault of the artist not to have been exact in every thing that depended on himself. He has, for instance, brought the hair too forward on the temples, which gives the forehead a less agreeable and delicate air. He has also forgotten two or three little veins, seen through the transparent skin in winding branches of purple, resembling those of the Iris we once stood admiring in the gardens of *Clarens*. The colouring of the cheeks is also too near the eyes, and is not softened into that glowing blush of the rose toward the lower part of the face, which distinguishes the lovely original. One would take it for an artificial *rouge*, plastered on like the carmine of the French ladies. Nor is this defect a small one, as it makes the eyes appear less soft, and its looks more bold.

But pray what has he done with those dimples, wherein the little cupids lurk at the corners of your mouth; and which in my fortunate days I used to stifle with kisses? he has not given half their beauty to these charming lips. He has not given the mouth that agreeable serious turn, which changing in an instant into a smile, ravishes the heart with inconceivable enchantment, and inspires it with an instantaneous rapture which no words can express. It is true, your portrait cannot pass from the serious to a smile. This is, alas! the very thing of which I complain. To paint

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paint all your charms you should be drawn every instant of your life.

But to pass over the injustice the painter has done you, in overlooking your beauties, he has done you more, in having omitted your defects. He has left out that almost imperceptible mole under your right eye, as well as that on the right side of your neck. He has not—heavens! was the man a statue! he has forgot the little scar under your lip; he has made your hair and eye-brows of the same colour: which they are not. Your eye-brows are more upon the chesnut, and your hair rather of the ash-colour.

Bionda testa occhi azurri e bruno ciglio.

Light hair, blue-eyes, and eye-brows lovely brown.

He has made the lower part of the face exactly oval; not observing the small hollow between your cheeks and chin, which makes their out-lines less regular and more agreeable. These are the most palpable defects, but he has omitted several others, for which I owe him no goodwill: for I am not only in love with your beauties, but with Eloisa herself, just as she is. If you would not be obliged for any charm to the pencil, I would not have you lose by it the smallest defect; my heart can never be affected by charms that are not your own.

As to the drapery, I shall take the more notice of it, as, whether in a dishabille or otherwise, I have always seen you dressed with more taste than you are in the portrait: the head-dress is too large; you will say it is composed only of flowers. That's true; but there are too many. Don't you remember the ball, at which

you were dressed like a country girl, and your cousin told me I danced like a philosopher? you had then no other head-dress than your long tresses, turned up and fastened at top with a golden bodkin, in the manner of the villagers of Berne. No, the sun glittering in all its radiance displays not half that lustre, with which you then engaged the eyes and hearts of the beholders; and there is no one who saw you that day, that can ever forget you during his whole life. It is thus, my Eloisa, your head ought to have been dressed. It is your charming hair that should adorn your face, and not those spreading roses. Tell my cousin, for I discover her choice and direction, that the flowers with which she has thus covered and profaned your tresses, are in no better taste than those she gathers in *Adonis*. One might overlook them did they serve as an ornament to beauty, but I cannot permit them to hide it.

With respect to the bust, it is singular that a lover should be more nice in this particular than a father; but, to say the truth, I think you are too carelessly dressed. The portrait of Eloisa should be modest as herself. These hidden charms should be sacred to love. You say the painter drew them from his imagination. I believe it; indeed, I believe it. Had he caught the least glimpse of thine, his eyes would have gazed on them for ever, but his hand would not have attempted to paint them: why was it necessary the rash artist should form them in imagination? this was not only an offence against decency, but I will maintain it also to be want of taste. Yes, your countenance is too modest to support the disorder of your breast; it is plain
that

that one of these objects ought to hinder the other from being seen : it is the privilege of love alone to see both together, and when its glowing hand uncovers the charms that modesty conceals, the sweet confusion of your eyes shews that you forget not that you expose them.

Such are the criticisms that a continual attention has occasioned me to make on your portrait : in consequence of which I have formed a design to alter it, agreeable to my own taste. I have communicated my intentions to an able master, and from what he has already done, I hope to see you soon more like yourself. For fear of spoiling the picture, however, we try our alterations first on a copy, which I have made him take ; and make them in the original only when we are quite sure of their effect. Although I design but indifferently, my artist cannot help admiring the subtilty of my observations, but he does not know that love who dictates them, is a greater master than he. I seem to him also sometimes very whimsical : he tells me I am the first lover that ever chose to hide objects which others think cannot be too much exposed ; and when I answer him, it is in order to have a full view of you, that I dress you up with so much care, he stares at me, as if he thought me a fool. Ah ! my Eloisa, how much more affecting would be your portrait, if I could but find out the means to display in it your mind, as well as your face ; to paint at once your modesty and your charms ! what would not the latter gain by such an amendment ! at present those only are seen which the painter imagined, and the ravished spectator thinks them such as they are. I know not what

secret enchantment is about your person, but every thing that touches you seems to partake of its virtue: one need only perceive the hem of your garment to revere the wearer of it. One perceives in your dress how the veil of the graces affords a covering to the model of beauty; and the taste of your modest apparel displays to the mind all those charms it conceals.

L E T T E R XCI.

To ELOISA.

OH, Eloisa! you whom once I could call mine, though now I profane your virtuous name! my pen drops from my trembling hand, I blot the paper with my tears, I can hardly trace the first words of a letter, which ought never to be written; alas! I can neither speak nor be silent. Come, thou dear and respectable image of my love, come, purify and strengthen a heart depressed with shame and torn to pieces by remorse. Support my resolution that fails me, and give my contrition the power to avow the involuntary crime into which the absence of Eloisa has plunged me.

Oh! Eloisa, how contemptible will you think me! and yet you cannot hold me in greater contempt than I do myself. Abject as I may seem in your eyes, I am yet a hundred times more so in my own; for, in reflecting on my own demerits, what mortifies me most is to see, to feel you still in my heart, in a place henceforward so little worthy of your image; and to think

think that the remembrance of the truest pleasures of love could not prevent me from falling into a snare that had no lure, from being led into a crime that presented no temptation.

Such is the excess of my confusion, that I am afraid, even in recurring to your clemency, lest the perusal of the lines in which I confess my guilt should offend you. Let your purity and chastity forgive me a recital which should have been spared your modesty, were it not the means to expiate, in some degree, my infidelity. I know I am unworthy of your goodness; I am a mean, despicable wretch, but I will not be an hypocrite or deceive you, for I had rather you should deprive me of your love, and even life itself, than to impose on Eloisa for a moment. Lest I should be tempted, therefore, to seek excuses to palliate my crime, which will only render me the more criminal, I will confine myself to an exact relation of what has happened to me; a relation that shall be as sincere as my repentance, which is all I shall say in my defence.

I had commenced acquaintance with some officers in the guards, and other young people among my countrymen, in whom I found a good innate disposition, which I was sorry to see spoiled by the imitation of I know not what false airs, which nature never designed for them. They laughed at me in their turn, for preserving in Paris the simplicity of our ancient Helvetian manners; and, construing my maxims and behaviour into an indirect censure of theirs, resolved to make me a convert to their own practices, at all hazards. After several

attempts which did not succeed, they made another too well concerted to fail of success. Yesterday morning they came to me, with a proposal to go with the lady of a certain colonel they mentioned; who, from the report, they were pleased to say, of my good sense, had a mind to be acquainted with me. Fool enough to give into this idle story, I represented to them the propriety of first making her a visit; but they laughed at my punctilios, telling me the frankness of a Swiss did not at all agree with such formality, and that so much ceremony would only serve to give her a bad opinion of me. At nine o'clock then in the evening, we waited on the lady. She came out to receive us on the stair-case, through an excess of civility which I had never seen practised before. Having entered the apartment, I observed a servant lighting up pieces of old wax candles over the chimney, and over all an air of preparation which did not at all please me. The mistress of the house appeared handsome, tho' a little past her prime: there were also several other women with her much about the same age and figure; their dress, which was rich enough, had more of finery in it than taste; but I have already observed to you that this is not a sure sign by which to judge of the condition of the women of this country.—The first compliments were made as usual, custom teaching one to cut them short, or to turn them into pleasantry, before they grew tiresome. Something unusual however appeared as soon as our discourse became general and serious. I thought the ladies seemed to wear an air of restraint,

as if it were not familiar to them, and now, for the first time since I have been at Paris, I saw women at a loss to support a rational conversation. To find an easy topic, they brought up at length their family affairs, and as I knew none of them, I had little share in the conversation. Never before did I hear so much talk of the colonel, and the colonel; which not a little surprised me, in the country where it is the custom to distinguish people rather by their names than by their profession, and in which almost every man of rank in the army has besides some other title of distinction.

This affectation of dignity soon gave way to a behaviour more natural to them: they began to talk low, and, running insensibly into an air of indecent familiarity, they laughed and whispered every time they looked at me; while the lady of the house asked me the situation of my heart, with a certain boldness of manner, not at all adapted to make a conquest of it. The table was spread, and that freedom which seems to make no distinction of persons, but generally puts every one without design in the proper place, fully convinced me what sort of company I was in. But it was too late to recede: putting my confidence therefore in my aversion, I determined to apply that evening to observation, and to employ in the study of that order of women, the only opportunity I might ever have. Little, however, was the fruit of my attention: I found them so insensible to their present situation, so void of apprehensions for the future, and, excepting the tricks of their profession, so stupid in all respects, that the contempt into

which they sunk in my opinion, soon effaced the pity I first entertained for them. In speaking even of pleasure itself, I saw they were incapable of feeling it. They appeared rapacious after every thing that could gratify their avarice; and, excepting what regarded their interest, I heard not a word drop from their lips that came from the heart. I was astonished to think how men, not abandoned like themselves, could support so disgustful a society. It were, in my opinion, the most cruel punishment that could be inflicted, to oblige them to keep such company.

We sat a long while at supper, and the company at length began to grow noisy. For want of love, the wine went briskly round to inflame the guests: the discourse was not tender but immodest, and the women strove by the disorder of their dress to excite those passions which should have caused that disorder. All this had a very different effect upon me, and their endeavours to seduce me only heightened my disgust. Sweet modesty! said I to myself, it is thine to inspire the sublimest raptures love can bestow! how impotent are female charms when thou hast left them! if the sex did but know thy power, what pains would they not take to preserve thee inviolate; if not for the sake of virtue, at least for their interest! but modesty is not to be assumed. There is not a more ridiculous artifice in the world than that of the prude who affects it. What a difference, thought I, is there between the impudence of these creatures, with their licentious expressions, and those timid and tender looks, those conversations so full

full of modesty, so delicate, so sentimental, which —but I dare not finish the sentence; I blush at the comparison—I reproach myself, as if it were criminal, with the delightful remembrance of her who pursues me wherever I go. But how shall I now dare to think of her?—alas! it is impossible to erase your image from my heart: let me then strive to conceal it there.

The noise, the discourse I heard, together with the objects that presented themselves to my view, insensibly inflamed me; my two neighbours plied me incessantly with wine. I found my head confused, and, though I drank all the while a good deal of water in my wine, I now took more water, and at length determined to drink water only. It was then I perceived the pretended water set before me was white wine, and that I had drank it from the first. I made no complaints, as they would only have subjected me to raillery, but gave over drinking entirely. But it was too late, the mischief was already done, and the intoxicating effects of what I had already drank soon deprived me of the little sense that remained. I was surprized, in recovering my senses, to find myself in a retired closet, locked in the embraces of one of those creatures I had supped with, and in the same instant had the mortification to find myself as criminal as I could possibly be.

I have finished this horrible relation. Would to heaven it might never more offend your eyes, nor torture my memory. O Eloisa! it is from you I expect my doom; I demand, I deserve, your severity. Whatever be my punishment, it

will be less cruel than the remembrance of my crime.

L E T T E R X C I I .

The A N S W E R .

YOU may be easy as to the fear of having offended me. Your letter rather excited my grief than my anger. It is not me, it is yourself you have offended, by a debauch in which the heart had no share. I am at this, however, but the more afflicted; for I had much rather you should affront Eloisa than debase yourself; and the injury you have done to your own person is that only which I cannot forgive--To regard only the fault of which you accuse yourself, you are not so culpable as you imagine: I can reproach you on that account only with imprudence. But what I blame you for, is of a greater moment, and proceeds from a failing, that has taken deeper root than you imagine, and which it is the part of a friend to lay before you.

Your first error lies in having taken a wrong path, in which the farther you advance the more you will go astray; and I tremble to see that, unless you tread back the steps you have taken, you are inevitably lost. You have suffered yourself to be led insensibly into the very snares I dreaded. The more gross and palpable allurements of vice I knew could not seduce you, but the bad company you keep, hath begun by deluding your reason, to corrupt your morals, and hath already made the first essay of its maxims on your behaviour.

You

You have told me nothing, it is true, in particular, of the acquaintance you have made in Paris; but it is easy to judge of your companions by your letters, and of those who point out the objects, by your manner of describing them. I have not concealed from you how little satisfied I have been with your remarks; you have nevertheless continued them in the same style, which has only increased my displeasure. In fact, one would rather take your observations for the sarcasms of some petit-maitre, than for the animadversions of a philosopher; and it is hardly possible to believe them written by the same hand that wrote your former letters. Do you think to study mankind by the confined behaviour of a few societies of finical prudes and other idlers? do none of your remarks penetrate beyond the exterior and changeable varnish which ought hardly to have engaged your attention? was it worth while to collect with so much care those peculiarities of manners and decorum, which ten years hence will no longer exist; while the unalterable springs of the human heart, the constant and secret workings of the passions have escaped your researches? let us turn to your letter concerning women: in what have you instructed me to know them? you have given indeed a description of their dress, which all the world might be as well acquainted with; and have made some malicious observations on the address and behaviour of some, as also of the irregularities of a few others, which you have unjustly attributed to them all, as if no person of virtuous sentiments was to be found in Paris, and every woman flaunted about there in her chariot,

and sat in the front boxes. Have you told me any thing that can throw real light upon their true character, taste or maxims? and is it not strange, that in describing the women of a country, a man of sense should omit what regards their domestic concerns and education of their children *? the only circumstance in that letter characteristic of its author, is the apparent satisfaction with which you commend the goodness of their natural disposition, which, I must confess, doth honour to yours. And yet, what have you done more in that than barely justice to the sex in general? for in what country are not gentleness of manners and compassion for the distressed, the amiable qualities of the women?

What a difference had there been in the picture, if you had described what you had seen, rather than what you had heard; or, at least, if you had only consulted people of sense and solidity on the occasion? was it for you, who have taken so much pains to cultivate your genius, to throw away your time deliberately in the company of a parcel of inconsiderate young fellows; who take pleasure in the society of persons of virtue and understanding, not to imitate, but only to seduce and corrupt them. You lay a stress on the equality of age, with which you should

* And why should he not omit it? have the women of these times any thing to do with concerns of this kind? what would become of us and the state? what would become of our celebrated authors, our illustrious academicians, if the ladies should give up the direction of matters of literature and business, and apply themselves only to the affairs of their family?

have

have nothing to do, and forgot that of sense and knowledge, which is more peculiarly essential. In spite of your violent passions, you are certainly, the most pliable man in the world; and, notwithstanding the ripeness of your judgment, permit yourself to be conducted so implicitly by those you converse with, that you cannot keep company with young people of your own age without condescending to become a mere infant in their hands. Thus you mistake in your choice of proper companions, and debase yourself in not fixing upon such as have more understanding than yourself.

I do not reproach you with having been inadvertently taken into a dishonest house; but with having been conducted thither by a party of young officers, who ought never to have known you; or at least, whom you should never have permitted to direct your amusements. With respect to your project of making them converts to your own principles, I discover in it more zeal than prudence; if you are of too serious a turn to be their companion, you are too young to be their tutor, and you ought not to think of reforming others till there is nothing left to reform in yourself.

The next fault, which is of more moment and less pardonable, is to have passed voluntarily the evening in a place so unworthy of you, and not to have left the house the moment you knew what it was. Your excuses on this head are mean and pitiful. You say *it was too late to recede*, as if any decorum were necessary to be observed in such a place, or as if decorum ought
ever

Ever to take place of virtue, and that it were ever too late to abstain from doing evil. As to the security you found in your aversion to the manners of such a company, I will say nothing of it; the event has shewn you how well it was founded. Speak more freely to one who so well knows how to read your heart; say, you were ashamed to leave your companions; you were afraid they would laugh at you; a momentary hiss struck you with fear, and you had rather expose yourself to the bitterness of remorse than the tartness of raillery. Do you know what a maxim you followed on this occasion? that which first vitiates every innocent mind, drowns the voice of conscience in publick clamour, and represses the resolution of doing well by the fear of censure. Such a mind may overcome temptations, and yet yield to the force of bad examples, may blush at being really modest and become impudent through bashfulness, a false bashfulness that is more destructive to a virtuous mind than bad inclinations. Look well then to the security of yours; for, whatever you may pretend, the fear of ridicule which you affect to despise, prevails over you, in spite of yourself. You would sooner face a hundred dangers than one raillery, and never was seen so much timidity united to so intrepid a mind.

Not to make a parade of precepts which you know better than I, I shall content myself with proposing a method more easy and sure perhaps than all the arguments of philosophy. This is on such occasions to make in thought a slight transposition of circumstances, to anticipate a few minutes

minutes of time. If, at that unfortunate supper, you had but fortified yourself against a moment's raillery, by the idea of the state of mind you should be in as soon as you got into the street; had you represented to yourself that inward contentment you should feel at having escaped the snares laid for you, the consciousness of having avoided the danger, the pleasure it would give you to write me an account of it, that which I should myself receive in reading it: had you, I say, called these circumstances to mind, is it to be supposed they would not have over-balanced the mortification of being laughed at for a moment; a mortification you would never have dreaded, could you but have foreseen the consequences? but what is this mortification, which gives consequence to the raillery of people for whom one has no esteem? this reflection would infallibly have saved you, in return for a moment's imaginary disgrace, much real and more durable shame, remorse, and danger; it would have saved (for why should I dissemble?) your friend, your Eloisa, many tears.

You determined, you tell me, to apply that evening to observation. What an employment! what observation! I blush for your excuses. Will you not also, when an opportunity offers, have the same curiosity to make observations on robbers in their dens? and to see the methods they take to seize their prey, and strip the unhappy passengers that fall into their hands? are you ignorant that there are objects too detestable for a man of probity to look on, and that the indignation of virtue cannot support the sight of vice?

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The philosopher remarks indeed the publick licentiousness which he cannot prevent; he sees it, and his countenance betrays the concern it gives him: but as to that of individuals, he either opposes it or turns away his eyes from the sight, lest he should give it a sanction by his presence. May I not ask besides what necessity there was to be eye-witness of such scenes, in order to judge of what passed, or the conversation that was held there? for my part, I can judge more easily of the whole, from the intention and design of such a society, than from the little you tell me of it, and the idea of those pleasures that are to be found there, gives me a sufficient insight into the characters of such as go to seek them.

I know not if your commodious scheme of philosophy has already adopted the maxims, which, it is said, are established in large towns, for the toleration of such places: but I hope, at least, you are not one of those who debase themselves so much as to put them in practice, under the pretext of I know not what chimerical necessity, that is known only to men of debauched lives; as if the two sexes were in this respect of a different constitution; and, that during absence or celibacy, a virtuous man is under a necessity of indulging himself in liberties which are denied to a modest woman. But if this error does not lead you to prostitutes, I am afraid it will continue to lead your imagination astray. Alas! if you are determined to be despicable, be so at least without pretext; and add not the vice of lying to that of drunkenness. All those pretended necessities have no foundation in nature,
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but in the voluntary depravation of the senses. Even the fond illusions of love are refined by a chaste mind, and pollute it only when the heart is first depraved. On the contrary, chastity is its own support; the desires constantly repressed accustom themselves to remain at rest, and temptations are only multiplied by the habit of yielding to them. Friendship has made me twice overcome the reluctance I had to write on such a subject, and this shall be the last time; for on what plea can I hope to obtain that influence over you, which you have refused to virtue, to love, and to reason.

But I return to that important point, with which I began this letter; at one and twenty years of age you sent me, from the Valais, grave and judicious descriptions of men and things: at twenty-five you write me from Paris, a pack of trifling letters, wherein good sense is sacrificed to a certain quaintness and pleasantry, very incompatible with your character. I know not how you have managed; but since you have resided among people of refined talents, yours appear to be diminished; you profited among clowns, and have lost by the wits. This is not, however, the fault of the place you are in, but of the acquaintance you have made: for nothing requires a greater judgment than to make a proper choice in a mixture of the excellent and execrable. If you would study the world, keep company with men of sense, who have known it by long experience and observations made at leisure; not with giddy-headed boys, who see only the superficies of things, and laugh at what they

they themselves make ridiculous. Paris is full of sensible men, accustomed to reflection, and to whom every day presents a fertile field for observation. You will never make me believe that such grave and studious persons run about, as you do, from house to house, and from club to club, to divert the women and young fellows, and turn all philosophy into chit-chat. They have too much dignity thus to debase their characters, prostitute their talents, and give a sanction by their example, to modes which they ought to correct. But, if even most of them should, there are certainly many who do not, and it is those you ought to have chosen for companions.

Is it not extraordinary, that you should fall into the very same error in your behaviour, which you blame in the writings of the comic poets: from which you say one would imagine Paris was peopled only by persons of distinction. These are your constant theme, while those of your own rank escape your notice; as if the ridiculous prejudices of nobility had not cost you sufficiently dear, to make you hate them for ever; or that you thought you degraded yourself in keeping company with honest citizens and tradesmen, the most respectable order of men, perhaps in the whole country. It is in vain you endeavour to excuse yourself, in that your acquaintance are those of Lord B ———: with the assistance of these, you might easily have made others of an inferior rank. So many people are desirous to rise, that it is always easy to descend; and by your own confession the only way, to come at the true manners of a nation is
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to study the private life of the most numerous order among them; for to confine your observations to those who only personate assumed characters is only to observe the actions of a company of comedians.

I would have your curiosity exerted still farther. How comes it, that in so opulent a city, the poor people are so miserable; while such extreme distress is hardly ever experienced among us, where, on the other hand, we have no examples of immense wealth? This question is, in my opinion, well worth your asking; but it is not the people you converse with that are to resolve it. It is in the splendid apartments of the rich that the novice goes to learn the manners of the world; but the man of sense and experience betakes himself to the cottages of the poor. These are the places for the detection of those iniquitous practices, that in polite circles are varnished over and hid beneath a specious shew of words. It is here that the rich and powerful, by coming to the knowledge of the basest arts of oppression, feel for the unhappy what in public they only affect. If I may believe our old officers, you will learn many things in the garrets of a fifth floor, which are buried in profound silence at the *hotels*, in the suburbs of St. Germain: you will find that many fine talkers would be struck dumb, if all those they have made unhappy were present to contradict their boasted pretensions to humanity.

I know the sight of misery that excites only fruitless pity is disagreeable; and that even the rich turn away their eyes from the unhappy objects to whom they refuse relief: but money is
not

not the only thing the unfortunate stand in need of; and they are but indolent in well-doing who can exert themselves only with their purse in their hands. Consolation, advice, concern, friends, protection, these are all so many resources which compassion points out to those who are not rich, for relief of the indigent. The oppressed often stand in need only of a tongue, to make known their complaints. They often want no more than a word they cannot speak, a reason they are ashamed to give, entrance at the door of a great man which they cannot obtain. The intrepid countenance of disinterested virtue may remove infinite obstacles, and the eloquence of a man of probity make even a tyrant tremble in the midst of his guards.

If you would then act as a man, learn to descend again. Humanity, like a pure salutary stream, flows always downwards to its level; fertilising the humble vales, while it leaves dry those barren rocks, whose threatening heads cast a frightful shade, or tumbling headlong down involve the plain in ruins.

Thus, my friend, may you make use of the past conduct, by drawing thence instructions for the future; and learn how goodness of heart may be of advantage to the understanding: whoever lives among people in office, cannot be too cautious of the corruptible maxims they inculcate; and it is only the constant exercise of their benevolence that can secure the best hearts from the contagion of ambition. Try this new kind of study: it is more worthy of you, than those you have hitherto adopted; and, believe me, as the genius is impoverished in proportion

as the mind is corrupted, you will soon find, on the contrary, how much the practice of virtue elevates and improves it: you will experience how much the interest you take in the misfortunes of others will assist you in tracing their source, and will thereby learn to escape the vices that produce them.

I ought to take all the freedom with you that friendship authorises in the critical situation in which you at present appear: lest a second step towards debauchery should plunge you beyond recovery, and that, before you have time to recollect yourself. I cannot conceal from you, my friend, how much your ready and sincere confession has affected me; as I am sensible how much shame and confusion it must have cost you, and from thence how heavy this piece of ill-conduct must sit upon your heart; an involuntary crime, however, is easily forgiven and forgot. But, for the future, remember well that maxim, from which I shall never recede: he who is a second time deceived on these occasions, cannot be said to have been deceived the first.

Adieu, my friend, be careful, I conjure you, of your health; and be assured I shall not retain the least remembrance of a fault I have once forgiven.

P. S. I have seen, in the hands of Mr. Orbe, the copies of several of your letters to Lord B——, which oblige me to retract part of the censure I have passed on the matter and manner of your observations. These letters, I must confess, treat of important subjects, and appear to be full of serious and judicious reflections. But
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hence it is evilent, that you either treat my cousin and me disdainfully, or that you set little value on our esteem, in sending us such trivial relations as might justly forfeit it, while you transmit so much better to your friend. It is, in my opinion, doing little honour to your instructions to think your scholars unworthy to admire your talents: for you ought to affect at least, were it only through vanity, to think us capable of it.

I own political matters are not proper subjects for women: and my uncle has tired us with them so heartily, that I can easily conceive you were afraid of doing so too. To speak freely, also, these are not the topics I prefer: their utility is too foreign to affect me, and their arguments too subtle to make any lasting impression. Bound to respect the government, under which it is my fate to have been born, I give myself no trouble to enquire whether there are any better. To what end should I be instructed in the knowledge of governments, who have so little power to establish them? and why should I afflict myself with the consideration of evils too great for me to remedy, when I am surrounded with others that are in my power to redress? but, for my love to you, the interest I should not take in the subject, I should take in the writer. I collect, with a pleasing admiration, all the fruits of your genius; and, proud of merit so deserving of my heart, I beseech of love only so much wit as to make me relish yours. Refuse me not then the pleasure of knowing and admiring your works of merit. Will you mortify me so much as to give me reason to think that, if heaven should
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ever unite us, you will not judge your companion worthy to know and adopt your sentiments?

L E T T E R X C H I.

From ELOISA.

WE are undone! all is discovered! your letters are gone! they were there last night, and could have been taken away but to-day. 'Tis my mother: it can be no body else. If my father should see them, my life is in danger. But why should he not see them, if I must renounce—Heavens! my mother sends for me, whither shall I fly? how shall I support her presence? O that I could hide myself in the centre of the earth! I tremble every limb, and am unable to move one step—the shame, the mortification, the killing reproaches—I have deserved it, I will support it all. But oh! the grief, the tears of a weeping mother—O, my heart, how piercing!—she waits for me; I can stay no longer—she will know—I must tell her all—Regianino will be dismissed. Write no more till you hear further—who knows if ever—yet I might—what? deceive her?—deceive my mother!—alas! if our safety lies in supporting a falsehood, farewell, we are indeed undone!

L E T.

LETTER XCIV.

From Mrs. ORBE.

O How you afflict all those who love you! what tears have already been shed on your account, in an unfortunate family, whose tranquillity has been disturbed by you alone! Dread to add to these tears by covering us with mourning: tremble lest the death of an afflicted parent should be the last effect of the poison you have poured into the heart of her child, and that your extravagant passion will at length fill you with eternal remorse. My friendship made me support your folly, while it was capable of being nourished by the shadow of hope; but how can it allow a vain constancy condemned by honour and reason, and which producing nothing but pain and misfortune can only deserve the name of obstinacy?

You know in what manner the secret of your passion, so long concealed from the suspicions of my aunt, has been discovered by your letters. How sensibly must such a stroke be felt by a tender and virtuous mother, less irritated against you, than against herself! she blames her blind negligence, she deploras her fatal delusion, her deepest affliction arises from her having had too high an esteem for her daughter, and her grief has filled Eloisa with a hundred times more sorrow than all her reproaches.

My poor cousin's distress is not to be conceived. No idea can be formed of it without seeing her. Her heart seems stifled with grief,
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and the violence of the sensations by which it is oppressed, gives her an air of stupidity more terrifying than the most piercing cries. She continues night and day by her mother's bed, with a mournful look, her eyes fixed on the floor, and profoundly silent; yet serving her with greater attention and vivacity than ever; then instantly relapsing into a state of dejection, she appears to be no longer the same person. It is very evident, that the mother's illness supports the spirits of her daughter; and if an ardent desire to serve her did not give her strength, the extinguished lustre of her eyes, her paleness, her extreme grief, make me apprehensive she would stand in great need of the assistance she bestows. My aunt likewise perceives it, and I see from the earnestness with which she recommends Eloisa's health to my care, how her poor heart is agitated, and how much reason we have to hate you for disturbing such a pleasing union.

This anxiety is still increased by the care of hiding from a passionate father, a dangerous secret, which the mother, who trembles for the life of her daughter, would conceal. She has resolved to observe in his presence their former familiarity; but if maternal tenderness with pleasure takes advantage of this pretext, a daughter filled with confusion, dares not yield her heart to caresses which she believes feigned, and which are the more painful, in proportion as they would be engaging, could she presume to think them real. At the fond caresses of her father she looks towards her mother with an air so tender, and so humble, that she seems to say: Ah! why am I not still worthy of your tenderness!

In my frequent conversations with the baroness d'Etange I could easily find by the mildness of her reprimands, and by the tone in which she spoke of you, that Eloisa has endeavoured, to the utmost of her power, to calm her too just indignation, and that she has spared no pains to justify us both at her own expence. Even your letters, besides a violent passion, contain a kind of excuse which has not escaped her: she reproaches you less for abusing her confidence, than she does her own weakness for putting it in your power. She has such an esteem for you, as to believe that no other man in your place, would have made a better resistance; and that your faults even spring from virtue. She now, she says, perceives the vanity of that boasted probity which does not secure a person in love, who is in other respects a worthy man, from the guilt of corrupting a virtuous girl, and without scruple dishonouring a whole family, to indulge a momentary madness. But to what purpose do we recur to what is past? our present business, is to conceal, under an everlasting veil, this odious mystery; to efface, if possible, the least vestige of it, and to second the goodness of heaven, which has left no visible proof of your folly. The secret is confined to six safe persons. The repose of all you have loved, the life of a mother reduced to despair, the honour of a respectable family, your own virtue, all these still depend on you, all these point out your duty: you may repair the evil you have done, you may render yourself worthy of Eloisa, and justify her fault by renouncing your pretensions. If I am not deceived in my opinion of your heart, nothing but the greatness
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of such a sacrifice can be equal to the love that renders it necessary. Relying on the sublimity of your sentiments, I have promised, in your name, every thing you ought to perform: dare to undeceive me, if I have presumed too much on your merit, or be now what you ought to be. It is necessary to sacrifice either your mistress or your love, and to shew yourself the most abject, or the most virtuous of mankind.

This unfortunate mother resolved to write to you: she even began the painful task. Oh! what stabs would her bitter complaints have given you! how would her affecting reproaches have wounded your heart! and her humble intreaties have filled you with shame! I have torn in pieces this distressful letter, which you would never have been able to support. I could not endure the preposterous sight of a mother humbling herself before the seducer of her child: you are worthy, at least, that we should not use means that would rend a heart of adamant, and drive to the extremes of despair, a man of uncommon sensibility.

Were this the first effort love had demanded from you, I might doubt of the success, and hesitate as to the degree of esteem you deserve: but the sacrifice you have made to the honour of Eloisa, by quitting this country, is a pledge of that you are going to make to her repose, by putting a stop to a useless correspondence. The first efforts of virtue are always the most painful; and you will lose the advantage of that which has cost you so dear, by obstinately maintaining a vain correspondence, attended with such danger to her you love, without the least advantage

to either of you; and which can only serve to prolong the torments of both. No longer doubt it; it is become absolutely necessary that this Eloisa, who was so dear to you, should be forgotten by the man she loved so well: in vain you dissemble your misfortunes, she was lost to you at the moment you left her. Or rather heaven disposed of her, before she gave herself to you; for her father had promised her to another before his return, and you too well know that the promise of that inexorable man is irrevocable. In what manner soever you regulate your conduct, your desires are opposed by an inevitable fate, and you can never possess her. The only choice you have left, is either to plunge her into an abyss of misfortunes and reproach, or to honour what you have adored, and restore to her, instead of the happiness she has lost, at least, the prudence, peace, and safety, of which she has been deprived by her fatal connection with you.

How would you be afflicted, how would you be stung with remorse, could you contemplate the real state of my unhappy friend, and the abasement to which she is reduced by remorse and shame? how is her lustre tarnished, how languid all her gracefulness? how are all her noble and engaging sentiments unhappily absorbed in this one passion? her friendship itself is cooled; scarcely does she partake of the pleasure I feel when we meet, her sick heart is only sensible of love and grief. Alas! what is become of that fondness and sensibility, of that delicacy of taste, of that tender interest in the pains and pleasures of others? she is still, I confess, mild, generous, compassionate; the amiable habit of doing well

cannot

cannot be effaced, but 'tis only a blind habit, a taste without reflection. Her actions are the same, but they are not performed with the same zeal; those sublime sentiments are weakened, that divine flame is extinguished, this angel is now no more than woman. Oh, what a noble mind have you seduced from the path of virtue!

L E T T E R X C V.

To the Baroness d'ETANGE.

O Verwhelmed with sorrow, I throw myself at your feet, not to shew a repentance that is out of my power; but to expiate an involuntary crime, by renouncing all that could render life a blessing. As no human passion ever equalled that inspired by your celestial daughter, never was there a sacrifice equal to that I am going to make to the most respectable of mothers; but Eloisa has too well taught me how to sacrifice happiness to duty; she has too courageously set me the example, for me, at least, in one instance, not to imitate her. Were my blood capable of removing your distress, I would shed it in silence, and complain of being able to give you only so feeble a proof of my affection; but to break the most sweet, the most pure, the most sacred bond that ever united two hearts, is alas! an effort which the whole universe could not oblige me to make, and which you alone could obtain.

Yes, I promise to live far from her, as long as you require it; I will abstain from seeing and writing to her; this I swear by your precious life, so necessary to the preservation of hers. I submit, not without horror, but without murmuring, to whatever you condescend to enjoin her and me. I will even add, that her happiness is capable of alleviating my misery, and that I shall die contented, if you give her a husband worthy of her. Oh, let him be found! and let him dare to tell me that his passion for Eloisa is greater than mine! In vain, may he have every thing that I want; if he has not my heart, he has nothing for Eloisa; but I have only this honest and tender heart. Alas! I have nothing more. Love, which levels all, exalts not the person; it elevates only the sentiments. Oh, had I dared to listen to mine for you, how often would my lips have pronounced the tender name of mother in addressing you?

Deign to confide in oaths, which shall not be vain, and in a man who is not a deceiver. If I ever dishonour your esteem, I must first dishonour myself. My unexperienced heart knew not the danger, till it was too late to fly: I had not then learned of your daughter the cruel art she has since taught me, of conquering love with its own weapons. Banish your fears, I conjure you. Is there a person in the world to whom her repose, her felicity, her honour, is dearer than it is to me? no, my word and my heart are securities for the engagement into which I now enter, both in my own name, and in that of my lovely friend. Assure yourself that no indiscreet word shall ever pass my lips, and that I

will

will breathe my last sigh without divulging the cause of my death. Calm therefore that affliction which consumes you, and which adds infinitely to my sufferings; dry up the tears that pierce my very soul; try to recover your health; restore to the most affectionate daughter the world ever produced, the happiness she has renounced for you; be happy; live, that she may value life; for, regardless of our misfortunes, to be the mother of Eloisa, is still sufficient cause for happiness.

L E T T E R XCVI.

To Mrs. ORBE,

With the preceding Letter inclosed.

THERE, cruel friend! is my answer. When you read it, if you know my heart, you will burst into tears, unless yours has lost its sensibility; but no longer overwhelm me with that merciless esteem, which I so dearly purchase, and which serves but to increase my torture.

Has your barbarous hand then dared to break the gentle union formed under your eye, even almost from infancy, and which your friendship seemed to share with so much pleasure? I am now as wretched as you would have me, and as there is a possibility of being. Do you conceive all the evil you have done? are you sensible that you have torn me from my soul? that what I have lost is beyond redemption, and that it is better to

die an hundred times, than not to live for each other? Why do you urge the happiness of Eloisa? can she be happy without contentment? why do you mention the danger of her mother? ah! what is the life of a mother, of mine, of yours, of her's itself, what is the existence of the whole world, to the delightful sensation by which we were united? O senseless and savage virtue! I obey thy unmeaning voice; I abhor thee, while I sacrifice all to thy dictates. What avail thy vain consolations against the distressful agonies of the soul? go, thou sullen idol of the unhappy, thou only servest to augment their misery, by depriving them of the resources which fortune offers. Yet I obey; yes, cruel friend, I obey. I will become, if possible, as insensible and savage as yourself. I will forget every thing upon earth that was dear to me. I will no longer hear or pronounce Eloisa's name, or yours. I will no more recal their insupportable remembrance. An inflexible vexation and rage shall preserve me from such misfortunes. A steady obstinacy shall supply the place of courage: I have paid too dearly for my sensibility; it were better to renounce humanity itself.

L E T T E R XCVII.

From Mrs. O R B E.

YOUR letter is indeed extremely pathetic, but there is so much love and virtue in your conduct, that it effaces the bitterness of your complaints: you are so generous, that I have

have not the courage to quarrel with you; for whatever extravagancies we may commit, if we are still capable of sacrificing all that is dear to us, we deserve praise rather than reproach; therefore, notwithstanding your abuse, you never was so dear to me, as since you have made me so fully sensible of your worth.

Return thanks to that virtue you believe you hate, and which does more for you than even your love. There is not one of us, not even my aunt, whom you have not gained by a sacrifice, the value of which she well knows. She could not read your letter without melting into tears: she had even the weakness to shew it to her daughter; but poor Eloisa's endeavours while she read it, to stifle her sighs and tears, quite overcame her, and she fainted away.

This tender mother, whom your letters had already greatly affected, begins to perceive from every circumstance, that your hearts are of a superior mould, and that they are distinguished by a natural sympathy, which neither time nor human efforts will ever be able to efface. She who stands in such need of consolation would herself freely console her daughter, if prudence did not restrain her; and I see her too ready to become her confident, to fear that she can be angry with me. Yesterday I heard her say, even before Eloisa, perhaps a little indiscreetly, "Ah! if it only depended on me!" — and tho' she said no more, I perceived by a kiss which Eloisa impressed on her hand, that she too well understood her meaning. I am even certain that she was several times inclined to speak to her inflexible husband, but whether the danger of exposing her daughter

to the fury of an enraged father, or whether it was fear for herself, her timidity has hitherto kept her silent: and her illness increases so fast, that I am afraid she will never be able to execute her half-formed resolution.

However, notwithstanding the faults of which you are the cause, that integrity of heart, visible in your mutual affection, has given her such an opinion of you, that she confides in the promise you have both made, of discontinuing your correspondence, and has not taken any precaution to have her daughter more closely watched: indeed, if Eloisa makes an ill return to her confidence, she will no longer be worthy of her affection. You would both deserve the severest treatment, if you were capable of deceiving the best of mothers, and of abusing her esteem.

I shall not endeavour to revive in your mind the hopes which I myself do not entertain; but I would shew you, that the most honest, is also the wisest part, and that if you have any resource left, it is in the sacrifice which reason and honour require. Mother, relations, and friends are now all for you, except the father, who will by this method be gained over, if any thing can do it. Whatever imprecations you may utter in the moment of despair, you have a hundred times proved to us, that there is no path more sure of leading to happiness than that of virtue. Therefore resume your courage, and be a man! be yourself. If I am well acquainted with your heart, the most cruel manner of losing Eloisa, would be by rendering yourself unworthy of her.

L E T T E R XCVIII.

From ELOISA.

SHE is no more ! my eyes have seen her's closed for ever ; my lips have received her last sigh ; my name was the last word she pronounced ; her last look was fixed on me. No, 'twas not life she seemed to quit ; too little had I known how to render that valuable ! From me alone she was torn. She saw me without a guide, and void of hope, overwhelmed by my misfortunes and my crime : to her, death was nothing ; she grieved only to leave her daughter in such a state of misery. She had but too much reason. What had she to regret on earth ? what could there be here below, in her eye, worth the immortal prize of patience and virtue, reserved for her in a better world ? what had she to do on earth, but to lament my shame ? Oh ! most incomparable woman ! thou now dwellest in the abode of glory and felicity ! thou livest ; whilst I, given up to repentance and despair, deprived for ever of thy care, of thy counsel, of thy sweet caresses, am dead to happiness, to peace, to innocence ! Nothing do I feel but thy loss ; nothing do I see but my reproach : my life is only pain and grief. Oh my dear, my tender mother ! alas, I am more dead than thou art !

Good God ! to whom do I shed these tears, and vent these sighs ? the cruel man who caused them, I make my confidant ! with him who has ren-

dered my life unhappy, I dare to deplore my misfortunes! yes, yes, barbarous as you are, share the torments you have made me suffer. You, for whom I have plunged the poignard into a mother's bosom, tremble at the misfortunes you have occasioned, and shudder with me at the horrid act you have committed. To what eyes dare I presume to appear, as despicable as I really am? before whom shall I degrade myself to the bent of my remorse? to whom, but to the accomplice of my crime, can I sufficiently make it known? it is my insupportable punishment, to have no accuser but my own heart, and to see attributed to the goodness of my disposition the impure tears that flow from a bitter repentance. I saw, I trembling saw the poisonous sorrow put a period to the life of my unhappy mother. In vain did her pity for me prevent her confessing it; in vain she affected to attribute the progress of her illness to the cause by which it was produced; in vain was my cousin induced to talk in the same strain. Nothing could deceive a heart torn with regret; and to my lasting torment, I shall carry to my tomb the frightful idea of having shortened her life, to whom I am indebted for my own.

O thou, whom heaven in its anger raised up to render me guilty and unhappy, for the last time receive into thy bosom the tears thou hast occasioned! I come not, as formerly, to share with thee the grief that ought to be mutual. These are the sighs of a last adieu, which escape from me in spite of myself. It is done: the empire of love is subdued in a soul condemned wholly

wholly to despair. I will consecrate the rest of my days to lamentation for the best of mothers. To her I will sacrifice that passion which was the cause of her death: happy shall I be, if the painful conquest be sufficient to expiate my guilt! Oh, if her immortal mind penetrates into the bottom of my heart, she will know that the sacrifice I make, is not entirely unworthy of her! Share with me then an effort which you have rendered necessary. If you have any respect remaining for the memory of an union, once so dear and fatal, by that I conjure you to fly from me for ever; no more to write to me; no more to aggravate my remorse; but suffer me to forget, if possible, our former connexion. May my eyes never behold you more! may I never more hear your name pronounced! may the remembrance of you never more agitate my mind! I dare still intreat, in the name of that love which ought never to have existed, that to so many causes of grief, you add not that of seeing my last request despised. Adieu then for the last time, dear and only — Ah, fool that I am — adieu for ever!

L E T T E R XCIX.

To Mrs. ORBE.

AT last the veil is rent; the long illusion is vanished; all my flattering hopes are extinguished; nothing is left to feed the eternal flame, but a bitter, yet pleasing remembrance, which
supports

supports my life, and nourishes my torments with the vain recollection of a happiness that is now no more.

Is it then true, that I have tasted supreme felicity? am I the same being whose happiness was once so perfect? could any one be susceptible of such torments, who was not doomed to eternal misery? Can he who has enjoyed the blessings I have lost, be deprived of felicity, and still exist? and can such contrary sensations affect the same mind? O ye glorious and happy days, surely ye were immortal! ye were too celestial ever to perish! your whole duration was one continued extasy, by which ye were converged like eternity into a single point. I knew neither of past nor future, and I tasted at once the delights of a thousand ages. Alas! ye are vanished like a shadow! that eternity of happiness was but an instant of my life. Time now resumes his tardy pace, and slowly measures the sad remains of my existence.

To render my distress still more insupportable, my increasing affliction is cruelly aggravated by the loss of all that was dear to me. It is possible, Madam, that you have still some regard for me: but you are busied by other cares, and employed in other duties. These my complaints, to which you once listened with concern, are now indiscreet. Eloisa! Eloisa herself discourages and abandons me. Gloomy remorse has banished love for ever. All is changed with respect to me; except the steadfastness of my own heart, which serves but to render my fate still more dreadful.

But,

But, to what purpose is it to say what I am, and what I ought to be? Eloisa suffers! is it a time to think of myself? her sorrow adds bitterness to mine. Yes, I had rather she would cease to love me, and that she were happy — cease to love me! — can she — hope it? — never, never! She has indeed forbid me to see or write to her. Alas! she removes the comforter, but never can the torment! Should the loss of a tender mother deprive her of a still more tender friend? does she think to alleviate her griefs, by multiplying her misfortunes? O love! can nature be revenged only at thy expence? No, no; in vain she pretends to forget me. Can her tender heart ever be separated from mine? do I not retain it in spite of herself? are sensations like those we have experienced, to be forgotten, and can they be remembered without feeling them still? Triumphant love was the bane of her felicity; and having conquered her passion, she will only be the more deserving of pity. Her days will pass in sorrow, tormented at once by vain regret, and vain desires, without ever being able to fulfil the obligations either of love or virtue.

Do not imagine, however, that in complaining of her errors, I cease to respect them. After so many sacrifices, it is too late for me to begin to disobey. Since she commands, it is sufficient; she shall hear of me no more. Is my fate now sufficiently dreadful? renounce my Eloisa! yes, but that's not the chief cause of my despair; it is for her I feel the keenest pangs; and her misfortunes render me more miserable than my own. You, whom she loves more than all the world,
and

and who next to me, are best acquainted with her worth; you, my amiable friend, are the only blessing she has left: a blessing so valuable as to render the loss of all the rest supportable. Be you her recompence for the comforts of which she is deprived; and for those also which she rejects: let a sacred friendship supply at once the tenderness of a parent, and a lover, by administering every consolation that may contribute to her happiness. O let her be happy, if she can be so, how great soever the purchase! may she soon recover the peace of mind of which I, alas, have robbed her! I shall then be less sensible of the torment to which I am doomed. Since in my own eyes I am nothing; since it is my fate to pass my life in dying for her; let her regard me as already dead; I am satisfied, if this idea will add to her tranquillity. Heaven grant, that by your kindness she may be restored to her former excellence, and her former happiness.

Unhappy daughter! alas, thy mother is no more! this is a loss that cannot be repaired, and for which so long as she reproaches herself, she can never be consoled. Her troubled conscience requires of her this dear and tender mother; and thus the most dreadful remorse is added to her affliction. O Eloisa! oughtest thou to feel these terrible sensations? thou who wert a witness of the sickness and of the last moments of that unfortunate parent! I intreat, I conjure you to tell me, what I ought to believe? If I am guilty, tear my heart in pieces: if our crimes were the cause of her death, we are two monsters unworthy of existence, and it were a double crime to think of so fatal an union: O, it were even

even a crime to live ! But, no ; I cannot believe that so pure a flame could produce such baleful effects. Surely the sentiments of love are too noble. Can heaven be unjust ? and could she, who sacrificed her happiness to the author of her life, ever deserve to be the cause of her death ?

L E T T E R C.

The Answer.

HOW can I cease to love you, when my esteem for you is daily encreasing ? how can I stifle my affection, whilst you are growing every day more worthy of my regard ? No, my dear, my excellent friend ; what we were to each other in early life, we shall continue to be for ever ; and if our mutual attachment no longer increases, it is because it cannot be increased. All the difference is, that I then loved you as my brother, and that now I love you as my son ; for tho' we are both younger than you, and were even your scholars, I now in some measure consider you as ours. In teaching us to think, you have learnt of us sensibility ; and whatever your English philosopher may say, this education is more valuable than the other ; if it is reason that constitutes the man, it is sensibility that conducts him.

Would you know why I have changed my conduct towards you ? it is not, believe me, because my heart is not still the same ; but because your situation is changed. I favoured your passion, while there remained a single ray of hope ;
but

but since, by obstinately continuing to aspire to Eloisa, you can only make her unhappy, to flatter your expectations would be to injure you. I had even rather increase your discontent, and thus render you less deserving of my compassion. When the happiness of both becomes impossible, all that is left for a hopeless lover, is to sacrifice his own to that of the object beloved.

This, my generous friend, you have performed in the most painful sacrifice that ever was made; but, by renouncing Eloisa, you will purchase her repose, though at the expence of your own.

I dare scarce repeat to you the ideas that occur to me on this subject; but they are fraught with consolation, and that emboldens me. In the first place, I believe, that true love, as well as virtue, has this advantage, that it is rewarded by every sacrifice we make to it, and that we in some measure enjoy the privations we impose on ourselves, in the very idea of what they cost us, and of the motives by which we were induced. You will be sensible that your love for Eloisa was in proportion to her merit; and that will increase your happiness. The exquisite self-love, which knows how to reap advantage from painful virtue, will mingle its charm with that of love. You will say to yourself, I know how to love, with a pleasure more durable and more delicate than even possession itself would have afforded. The latter wears out the passion by constant enjoyment; but the other lasts for ever; and you will still enjoy it, even when you cease to love.

Besides,

Besides, if what Eloisa and you have so often told me be true, that love is the most delightful sensation that can enter into the human heart, every thing that prolongs and fixes it, even at the expence of a thousand vexations, is still a blessing. If love is a desire, that is increased by obstacles, as you still say, it ought never to be satisfied; it is better to preserve it at any rate, than that it should be extinguished in pleasure. Your passion, I confess, has stood the proof of possession, of time, of absence, and of dangers of every kind; it has conquered every obstacle, except the most powerful of all, that of having nothing more to conquer, and of feeding only on itself. The world has never seen the passion stand this proof; what right have you then to hope, that yours would have stood the test? Time, which might have joined to the disgust of a long possession, the progress of age, and the decline of beauty, seems by your separation fixed and motionless in your favour; you will be always to each other in the bloom of your years; you will incessantly see her, as she was when you beheld her at parting, and your hearts, united even to the grave, will prolong, by a charming illusion, your youth and your love.

Had you never been happy, you might have been tormented by insurmountable inquietudes; your heart might have panted after a felicity of which it was not unworthy; your warm imagination would have incessantly required that which you have not obtained. But love has no delights which you have not tasted, and in your own stile, you have exhausted in one year the pleasures of a whole life. Remember the passionate

sionate letter you wrote after a certain rash interview. I read it with an emotion I had never before experienced; it had no traces of the permanent state of a truly tender heart, but was filled with the last delirium of a mind inflamed with passion, and intoxicated with pleasure. You yourself may judge that such transports are not to be twice experienced in this life, and that death ought immediately to succeed. This, my friend, was the summit of all, and whatever love or fortune might have done for you, your passion and your felicity must have declined. That instant was also the beginning of your disgrace, and Eloisa was taken from you, at the moment when she could inspire no new sensations, as if fate intended to secure your passion from being exhausted, and to leave in the remembrance of your past pleasures, a pleasure more sweet than all those you could now have enjoyed.

Comfort yourself then with the loss of a blessing that would certainly have escaped you, and would besides have deprived you of that you now possess. Happiness and love would have vanished at once; you have at least preserved that passion, and we are not without pleasure, while we continue to love. The idea of extinguished love is more terrifying to a tender heart, than that of an unhappy flame; and to feel a disgust for what we possess, is an hundred times worse than regretting what is lost.

If the reproaches made you, by my afflicted cousin, on the death of her mother, were well founded, the cruel remembrance would, I confess, poison that of your love, which ought for ever to be destroyed by so fatal an idea; but

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give no credit to her grief; it deceives her; or rather the cause to which she would ascribe her sorrow, is only a pretence to justify its excess. Her tender mind is always in fear that her affliction is not sufficiently severe, and she feels a kind of pleasure in adding bitterness to her distress; but she certainly imposes on herself, she cannot be sincere.

Do you think she could support the dreadful remorse she would feel, if she really believed she had shortened her mother's life? no, no, my friend, she would not then weep, she would have sunk with her into the grave. The baroness d'Etange's disease is well known; it was a dropy of the pericardium, which was incurable, and her life was despaired of, even before she had discovered your correspondence. I own it afflicted her much, but she had great consolation. How comfortable was it to that tender mother to see, while she lamented the fault of her daughter, by how many virtues it was counterbalanced, and to be forced to admire the dignity of her soul, while she lamented the weakness of nature? how pleasing to perceive with what affection she loved her? such indefatigable zeal! such continual solicitude! such grief at having offended her! what regret, what tears, what affecting caresses, what unwearied sensibility! In the eyes of the daughter were visible all the mother's sufferings; it was she who served her in the day, and watched her by night; it was from her hand that she received every assistance: you would have thought her some other Eloisa, for her natural delicacy disappeared, she was strong and robust, the most painful services
caused

caused no fatigue, and the intrepidity of her soul seemed to have created her a new body. She did every thing, yet appeared to be unemployed; she was every where, and yet rarely left her; she was perpetually on her knees by the bed, with her lips pressed to her mother's hand, bewailing her illness and her own misfortunes, and confounding these two sensations, in order to increase her affliction. I never saw any person enter my aunt's chamber, during the last days, without being moved even to tears, at this most affecting spectacle, to behold two hearts more closely uniting, at the very moment when they were to be torn asunder. It was visible that their only cause of anguish was their separation, and that to live or die would have been indifferent to either, could they have remained, or departed together.

So far from adopting Eloisa's gloomy ideas, assure yourself that every thing that could be hoped for from human assistance and consolation, have on her part concurred to retard the progress of her mother's disease, and that her tenderness and care have undoubtedly preserved her longer with us, than she would otherwise have continued. My aunt herself has told me a hundred times that her last days were the sweetest of her life, and that the happiness of her daughter was the only thing wanting to complete her own.

If grief must be supposed in any degree to have hastened her dissolution, it certainly sprang from another source. It is to her husband it ought to be ascribed. Being naturally inconstant, he lavished the fire of his youth on a thousand ob-
jects

jects infinitely less pleasing, than his virtuous wife; and when age brought him back to her, he treated her with that inflexible severity with which faithless husbands are accustomed to aggravate their faults. My poor cousin has felt the effects of it. An high opinion of his nobility, and that roughness of disposition which nothing can ever soften, have produced your misfortunes and hers. Her mother, who had always a regard for you, and who discovered Eloisa's love when it was too violent to be extinguished, had long secretly bemoaned the misfortune of not being able to conquer either the inclinations of her daughter, or the obstinacy of her husband, and of being the first cause of an evil which she could not remedy. When your letters unexpectedly fell into her hands, and she found how far you had misused her confidence, she was afraid of losing all by endeavouring to save all, and to hazard the life of her child in attempting to restore her honour. She several times sounded her husband without success. She often resolved to venture an entire confidence in him, and to shew him the full extent of his duty; but she was always restrained by her timidity. She hesitated while it was in her power, and when she would have told him, she was no longer able to speak; her strength failed her, she carried the fatal secret with her to the grave, and I who know his austerity, without having the least idea how far it may be tempered by natural affection, am satisfied, since Eloisa's life is in no danger.

All this she knows; but you will ask, what I think of her apparent remorse? in answer to which

which I must tell you, that love is more ingenuous than she. Overcome with grief for the loss of her mother, she would willingly forget you, and yet in spite of herself, Love disturbs her conscience in order to bring you to her memory. He chuses that her tears should be connected with the object of her passion, but she not daring to employ her thoughts directly on you, he deceives her into it under the mask of repentance: thus he imposes on her with so much art, that she is willing to encrease her woes rather than banish you from her thoughts. Your heart may perhaps be ignorant of such subterfuges, but they are not the less natural; for though your passion may be equal in degree, its nature is very different. Yours is warm and violent, hers soft and tender; your sensations are breathed forth with vehemence, but hers retort upon herself, and pierce her very inmost soul. Love animates and supports your heart, whilst hers is oppressed and dejected with its weight, all its springs are relaxed, her strength is gone, her courage is extinguished, and her virtue has lost its power. Her heroic faculties are not however annihilated but suspended: a momentary crisis may restore them to their full vigour, or totally destroy their existence. One step farther in this gloomy path and she is lost; but if her incomparable soul should recover itself, she will be greater, more heroic, more virtuous than ever, and there will be no danger of a relapse. Learn then, in this perilous situation, to revere the object of your love. Any thing that should come from you, though it were against yourself, would
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at this time prove mortal. If you are determined to persist, your triumph will be certain, but you will never possess the same Eloisa.

LETTER CH.

From Lord B.

I Had some pretensions to your friendship, you were become serviceable to me, and I was prepared to meet you. But what are my pretensions, my necessities, or my eagerness to you? you have forgot me, you do not even deign to write to me. I am not ignorant of your solitude, nor of your secret design; you are weary of existence. Die then, weak youth: yes die, thou daring yet cowardly mortal; but, in thy last moments, remember that thou hast stung the soul of thy sincere friend with the reflection of having served an ungrateful man.

LETTER CH.

The Answer.

YES, my kind friend, you may come. I was determined to taste no more pleasure upon earth, but we will meet once more. You are wrong; it is as impossible that you should meet with ingratitude, as that I should ever be ungrateful.

BILLET.

From ELOISA.

IT is time to renounce the errors of youth, and to abandon an illusive hope. I can never be yours. Restore to me that liberty of which my father chuses to dispose; or compleat my misery by a refusal which will ruin me for ever, without producing any advantage to yourself.

Eloisa Etange.

LETTER CHII.

*From the Baron d'ETANGE.**In which the preceding billet was inclosed.*

IF there remains in the mind of a seducer the least sentiment of honour or humanity, answer the billet of an unhappy girl, whose heart you have corrupted, and who should no longer exist, if I could suppose her to have carried the forgetfulness of herself any farther. I should not indeed be much surprized if the same philosophy which taught her to catch at the first man she saw, should also instruct her to disobey her father. Think of this matter. I always chuse to proceed with lenity and decency, when these methods are likely to succeed; but because I act thus

thus with you, you are not to suppose me ignorant in what manner a gentleman should take revenge of those beneath him.

L E T T E R C I V.

The Answer.

LET me intreat you, Sir, to spare those vain menaces, and that unjust reproach, which can neither terrify nor humble me. Between two persons of the same age there can be no *seducer* but love, and you can have no right to vilify a man whom your daughter honoured with her esteem.

What concessions do you expect, and from what authority are they demanded? is it to the author of all my misfortunes that I must sacrifice my remaining glimpse of hope? I will respect the father of Eloisa; but let him deign to be mine if he expects obedience. No, Sir, what opinion soever you may entertain of your proceedings, they will not oblige me, for your sake, to relinquish such valuable and just pretensions. As you are the sole cause of my misery, I owe you nothing but hatred; your pretensions are without foundation. But Eloisa commands: her I shall never disobey; therefore you have my consent. Another may possess her, but I shall be more worthy.

If your daughter had deigned to consult me concerning the limits of your authority, doubt not but I would have taught her to disregard your unjust pretensions. How despotic soever

may be the empire you assume, my rights are infinitely more sacred. The chain by which we are united marks the extent of paternal dominion, even in the estimation of human laws, and whilst you appeal to the law of nature, you yourself are trampling upon its institutions.

Do not alledge that delicate phantom honour, which you seem so determined to vindicate; for here again you are the sole offender. Respect Eloisa's choice, and your honour is secure; for I honour you in my heart, regardless of your insults. Notwithstanding all your gothic maxims, one honest man was never dishonoured by his alliance with another. If my presumption offends you, attempt my life; against you I shall never defend it. As to the rest, I am little anxious to know in what consists the honour of a gentleman; but with regard to that of an honest man, I own, it concerns me, and therefore I shall defend and preserve it pure and spotless to the end of my life.

Go, inhuman father, and meditate the destruction of your only child, whilst she, full of duty and affection, stands ready to yield her happiness a victim to prejudice and opinion: but be assured your own remorse will one day severely revenge my injuries, and you will then perceive, when it is too late, that your blind and unnatural hatred was no more fatal to me than to yourself. That I shall be wretched, is most certain; but if ever the just feelings of nature should emerge from the bottom of your heart, how infinitely greater will be your unhappiness in having sacrificed the only daughter of your bosom to a mere phantom: a daughter who has no
equal

E L O I S A. 173

equal in beauty, merit or virtue, and on whom indulgent heaven has bestowed every blessing, except a kind father.

B I L L E T.

Inclosed in the foregoing.

I Restore to Eloisa Etange the power to dispose of herself, and to give her hand without consulting her heart.

S. G.

L E T T E R C V.

From E L O I S A.

I Designed to give you a description of the scene which produced the billet you have received; but my father took his measures so artfully, that it ended only the instant before the post went out. His letter as certainly saved the mail as this will be too late; so that your resolution will be taken, and your answer dispatched before it can possibly reach you: therefore all detail would now be useless. I have done my duty; you will do yours; but fate will overwhelm us, and we are betrayed by honour. We are divided for ever! and to increase my horror, I am going to be forced into the arms of—O heavens! it was once in my power to live in thine. Just God!—we must tremble and be silent.

The pen falls from my hand. I have been of late much indisposed. This morning's affair has hurt me not a little — Oh, my head, my poor heart! I feel, I feel, I shall faint — Will heaven have no mercy on my sufferings? — I am no longer able to support myself — I will retire to my bed, and console myself, in the hope of rising no more. Adieu, my only love! adieu, for the last time, my dear, my tender friend. Ah! I live no longer for thee! have I not then already ceased to live?

L E T T E R C V I.

From ELOISA to Mrs. ORBE.

CAN it be true, my dear, my cruel friend, that you have called me back to life and sorrow? I saw the happy instant when I was going to be again united to the tenderest of mothers; but your inhuman kindness has condemned me to bemoan her yet longer: when my desire to follow her had almost snatched me from this earth, my unwillingness to leave you behind held me fast. If I am at all reconciled to life, it is from the comfort of not having entirely escaped the hand of death. Thank heaven! that beauty is no more for which my heart has paid so dearly. The distemper from which I am recovered has happily deprived me of it. This circumstance I hope will abate the gross ardour of a man so indelicate as to dare to marry me without my consent. When the only thing which he admired no longer

ger exists, surely he will be little anxious about the rest. Without breach of promise to my father, without injuring that friend whose life is in his power, I shall be able to repulse this importunate wretch: my lips will be silent, but my looks will speak for me. His disgust will defend me against his tyranny, and he will find me too disagreeable to dare to make me unhappy.

Ah, my dear cousin! you know a constant tender heart that would not be so repulsed. His passion was not confined to outward form or charms of person; it was me that he loved, and not my face; we were united in every part of our being, and so long as Eloisa had remained, her beauty might have fled, but love would for ever have continued. And yet he could consent——ungrateful youth!——yet it was but just, since I could ask it. Who would wish to retain by promise those who could withdraw their heart? and did I attempt to withdraw mine?——have I done it?——O heavens! why must every thing conspire to remind me of times that are no more, and to increase a flame which ought to be extinguished? In vain, Eloisa, are thy endeavours to tear the dear image from thy heart: 'tis too firmly attached; that heart itself would first be torn in pieces, and all thy endeavours serve but to engrave it the deeper.

May I venture to tell you a vision of my delirium during my fever, which has continued to torment me ever since my recovery? Yes, learn and pity the distraction of your unhappy friend, that you may thank heaven for preserving your heart from the horrid passion by which it is occasioned. During the most violent moment of

my phrenzy, when my fever was at the height, I thought I beheld the unhappy youth kneeling by my bed-side: not such as when he charmed my senses during the short period of my felicity; but pale, wild, and lost in despair. He took my hand, not disgusted with its appearance, and fearless of the sad infection, eagerly kissed and bathed it with his tears. I felt at the sight of him that pleasing emotion which his unexpected appearance used formerly to occasion. I endeavoured to dart towards him, but was restrained. You tore him from me, and what affected me most was his sighs and groans, which seemed to increase as he went farther from me.

It is impossible to describe the effect of this strange dream. My fever was long and violent; I continued many days insensible; I have seen him often in my phrenzy; but none of my dreams have left half the impression on my memory which this last did: it is impossible to drive it from my imagination. Methinks I see him every moment in that attitude. His air, his dress, his manner, his sorrowful and tender look, are continually before my eyes. His lips seem still to press my hand; I feel it wet with his tears. His plaintive voice melts my heart; now I behold him dragged far from me, whilst I endeavour in vain to hold him fast. In short, the whole imaginary scene appears in my mind as real as if it had actually passed.

I deliberated long before I could resolve to tell you this. Shame kept me silent when we were together; but the idea grows every day stronger, and torments me to such a degree, that I can no longer conceal my folly. Would that I were
entirely

entirely a fool ! why should I wish to preserve that reason which serves only to make me wretched ?

But to return to my dream. Rally me, my dear friend, if you will, for my simplicity ; but surely there is something mysterious in this vision, which distinguishes it from common phrenzy. Can it be a presage of his death ? or is he already dead ? and was it thus that heaven deigned for once to be my guide, and invite me to follow him whom I was ordained to love ? Alas ! a summons to the grave would be the greatest blessing I could receive.

To what purpose do I recall these vain maxims of philosophy which amuse only those who have no feelings ? they impose on me no longer, and I cannot help despising them. I believe that spirits are invisible ; but is it impossible that, between two lovers so closely united, there should be an immediate communication, independent of the body and the senses ? may not their mutual impressions be transmitted through the brain ?——Poor Eloisa, what extravagant ideas ; how credulous are we rendered by our passions ? and how difficult it is for a heart severely affected to relinquish its errors, even after conviction !

L E T T E R C V I.

The Answer.

UNfortunate and tender girl ! are you then destined to be unhappy ? I try in vain to keep you from sorrow, but you seem to court affliction ; your evil genius is more powerful than all my endeavours. Do not however add chimerical apprehensions to so many real causes of inquietude : and since my caution has been more prejudicial than serviceable to you, let me free you from a mistake which aggravates your misery ; perhaps the melancholy truth will be less tormenting. Know then that your dream, was not a dream ; that it was not the phantom of your friend which you beheld, but his real person ; and that the affecting scene, which is ever present to your imagination, did actually pass in your room, on the day after your disorder was at the crisis.

On the preceding day, I left you very late ; and Mr. Orbe, who would take me from you that night, was ready to depart ; when on a sudden we perceived that unhappy wretch, whose condition is truly deplorable, enter hastily, and throw himself at our feet. He took post horses immediately on the receipt of your last letter. By travelling day and night, he performed the journey in three days, and never stopped till the last stage ; where he waited in order to enter the town under favour of the night. I am ashamed to confess, that I was less eager than Mr. Orbe
to

to embrace him : for without knowing the intent of his journey, I foresaw the consequence. The bitter recollection of former times, your danger and his, his manifest discomposure of mind, all contributed to check so agreeable a surprize; and I was too powerfully affected to salute him with eagerness. I nevertheless embraced him with a heart-felt emotion in which he sympathized, and which reciprocally displayed itself in a kind of silent grief, more eloquent than tears and lamentations. The first words he uttered were —
“ How does she ? O, how is my Eloisa ? am I to live or die ? ” I concluded from thence, that he was informed of your illness, and upon the supposition that he was likewise acquainted with the nature of it, I spoke without any other precaution than that of extenuating the danger. When he understood that it was the small-pox, he made dreadful lamentation, and was taken suddenly ill. Fatigue and the want of sleep, together with perturbation of mind, had so entirely overcome him, that it was some time before we could bring him to himself. He had scarce strength to speak ; we therefore persuaded him to go to rest.

Nature being quite spent, he slept twelve hours successively, but with so much agitation that such a sleep must rather impair than recruit his strength. The next day gave birth to new perplexity: he was absolutely determined to see you. I represented to him the danger there was that his presence might occasion some fatal revolution in your distemper. He proposed to wait till there was no risque; but his stay itself was a terrible risque, of which I endeavoured to make

him sensible. He rudely interrupted me. "Cease, said he, with a tone of indignation, your cruel eloquence: it is too much, to exert it for my ruin. Do not hope to drive me from hence as you did when I was forced into exile. I would travel a hundred times from the farthest extremity of the world for one glance of my Eloisa: but I swear, added he with vehemence, by the author of my being, that I will not stir till I have seen her. We will try for once, whether I shall move you with compassion, or you make me guilty of perjury."

His resolution was fixed. Mr. Orbe was of opinion that we should contrive some means to gratify him, that we might send him away before his return was discovered: for he was only known to one person in the house, of whose secrecy I was assured; and we called him by a feigned name before the family*. I promised him that he should see you the next night, upon condition that he staid but a minute, that he did not utter a syllable, and that he departed the next morning before break of day. To these conditions, I exacted his solemn promise; then I was easy, I left my husband with him, and returned to you.

I found you much better, the eruption was quite compleat; and the physician raised my courage, by giving me hopes. I laid my plan beforehand with Bab, and the increase of your fever, though a little abated, leaving you still somewhat light-headed, I took that opportunity

* We find in the fourth part, that this feigned name was St. Preux.

to

to dismiss every body, and send my husband word to introduce his guest, concluding that before the paroxysm of your disorder was over, you would be less likely to recollect him. We had all the difficulty in the world to get rid of your disconsolate father, who was determined to sit up with you every night. At length I told him with some warmth, that he would spare nobody the trouble of watching, for that I was determined likewise to sit up with you, and that he might be assured, though he was your father, his tenderness for you was not greater than mine. He departed with reluctance, and we remained by ourselves. Mr. Orbe came about eleven, and told me that he had left your friend in the street. I went in search of him: I took him by the hand: he trembled like a leaf. As he went through the anti-chamber, his strength failed him: he drew his breath with difficulty, and was forced to sit down.

At length, having singled out some objects by the faint glimmering of a distant light——Yes, said he, with a deep sigh, I recollect these apartments. Once in my life I traversed them——about the same hour——with the same mysterious caution——I trembled as I do now——My heart fluttered with the same emotion——O! rash creature that I was——though but a poor mortal, I nevertheless dared to taste——What am I now going to behold in that same spot, where every thing diffused a delight with which my soul was intoxicated? what am I going to view, in that same object which inspired and shared my transports?——the retinue of
melan-

melancholy, the image of death, afflicted virtue; and expiring beauty!

Dear cousin; I will spare your tender heart the dismal detail of such an affecting scene. He saw you, and was mute. He had promised to be silent;—but such a silence! he fell upon his knees; he sobbed, and kissed the curtains of your bed; he lifted up his hands and eyes; he fetched deep and silent groans; he could scarce stifle his grief and lamentations. Without seeing him, you accidentally put one of your hands out of bed; he seized it with extravagant eagerness; the ardent kisses he impressed on your sick hand, awakened you sooner than all the noise and murmur which buzzed about you. I perceived that you recollected him, and in spite of all his resistance and complaints, I forced him from your chamber directly, hoping to elude the impression of such a fleeting apparition, under the pretence of its being the effect of your delirium. But finding that you took no notice of it, I concluded that you had forgot it. I forbade Bab to mention it, and I am persuaded she has kept her word. A needless caution which love has disconcerted, and which has only served to aggravate the pain of a recollection which it is too late to efface.

He departed as he had promised, and I made him swear not to stop in the neighbourhood. But, my dear girl, this is not all; I must acquaint you with another circumstance, of which likewise you cannot long remain ignorant. Lord B—— passed by two days afterwards; he hastened to overtake him; he joined him at Dijon, and found him ill. The unlucky wretch had
caught

caught the small-pox. He kept it secret from me that he had never had the distemper, and I introduced him without precaution. As he could not cure your disorder, he was determined to partake of it. When I recollect the eagerness with which he kissed your hand, I make no doubt but he underwent inoculation purposely. It is impossible to have been worse prepared to receive it; but it was the inoculation of love, and it proved fortunate. The author of life preserved the most tender lover that ever existed; he is recovered, and according to my lord's last letter, they are by this time actually set out for Paris.

You see, my too lovely cousin, that you ought to banish those melancholy terrors, which alarm you without reason. You have long since renounced the person of your friend, and you find that his life is safe. Think of nothing therefore, but how to preserve your own, and how to make the promised sacrifice to paternal affection with becoming grace. Cease to be the sport of vain hope, and to feed yourself with chimeras. You are in great haste to be proud of your deformity; let me advise you to be more humble; believe me you have yet too much reason to be so. You have undergone a cruel infection, but it has spared your face. What you take for seams, is nothing but a redness which will quickly disappear. I was worse affected than you, yet nevertheless you see I am tolerable. My angel, you will still be beautiful in spite of yourself; and do you think that the enamoured Wolmar, who, in three years absence, could not conquer a passion conceived in eight days,

days, is likely to be cured of it, when he has an opportunity of seeing you every hour? Oh! if your only resource is the hope of being disagreeable, how desperate is your condition!

L E T T E R CVIII.

From E L O I S A.

IT is too much. It is too much. O my friend! the victory is yours. I am not proof against such powerful love; my resolution is exhausted. My conscience affords me the consolatory testimony, that I have exerted my utmost efforts. Heaven, I hope, will not call me to account for more than it has bestowed upon me. This sorrowful heart which cost you so dear, and which you have more than purchased, is yours without reserve; it was attached to you the first moment my eyes beheld you; and it will remain yours to my dying breath. You have too much deserved it, ever to be in danger of losing it; and I am weary of being the slave of a chimerical virtue, at the expence of justice.

Yes, my most tender and generous lover, your Eloisa will be ever yours, will love you ever: I must, I will, I ought. To you I resign the empire which love has given you; a dominion of which nothing shall ever deprive you more. The deceitful voice which murmurs at the bottom of my soul, whispers in vain: it shall no longer betray me. What are the vain duties it prescribes, in opposition to a passion which
heaven

heaven itself inspired? is not the obligation which binds me to you, the most solemn of all? is it not to you alone that I have given an absolute promise? was not the first vow of my heart never to forget you; and is not your inviolable attachment a fresh tie to secure my constancy? In the transports of love with which I once more surrender my heart to thee, my only regret is, that I have struggled against sentiments so agreeable and so natural. Nature, O gentle nature, resume thy rights! I abjure the savage virtues which conspire to thy destruction. Can the inclinations which thou hast inspired, be more seductive, than a specious reason which has so often misled me?

O my dear friend, have some regard for the tenderness of my inclinations; you are too much indebted to them, to abhor them; but allow of a participation which nature and affection demands; let not the rights of blood and friendship be totally extinguished by those of love. Do not imagine that to follow you, I will ever quit my father's house. Do not hope that I will refuse to comply with the obligations imposed on me by parental authority. The cruel loss of one of the authors of my being, has taught me to be cautious how I afflict the other. No, she whom he expects to be his only comfort hereafter, will not increase the affliction of his soul, already oppressed with disquietude: I will not destroy all that gave me life. No, no, I am sensible of my crime, but cannot abhor it. Duty, honour, virtue, all these considerations have lost their influence, but yet I am not a monster; I am frail, but not unnatural. I am deter-

determined, I will not grieve any of the objects of my affection. Let a father, tenacious of his word, and jealous of a vain prerogative, dispose of my hand according to his promise, but let love alone dispose of my heart; let my tears incessantly trickle down the bosom of my tenderest friend. Let me be lost and wretched, but, if possible, let every one dear to me, be happy and contented. On you three my existence depends, and may your felicity make me forget my misery and despair.

L E T T E R C I X.

The ANSWER.

WE revive my Eloisa; all the real sentiments of our souls resume their wonted course. Nature has preserved our existence, and love has restored us to life. Did you suppose, could you be rash enough to imagine, you could withdraw your affections from me? I am better acquainted with your heart than yourself: that heart which heaven destined to be mine! I find we are united by one common thread, which death alone can divide. Is it in our power to separate them, or ought we even to attempt it? are they joined together by ties which man hath formed, and which man can dissolve? No, no, my Eloisa! if cruel destiny bars our claim to tender conjugal titles, yet nothing can deprive us of the character of faithful lovers; that shall be the comfort of our melan-

melancholy days, and we will carry it with us to the grave.

Thus we recover life only to renew our sufferings, and the consciousness of our existence is nothing more than a sense of affliction. Unfortunate beings ! how we are altered ? how have we ceased to be what we were formerly ? where is that enchantment of supreme felicity ? where are those exquisite raptures which enlivened our passion ? nothing is left of us but our love ; love alone remains, and all its charms are eclipsed. O, thou dear and too dutiful girl, thou fond fair one without resolution ! all our misfortunes are derived from thy errors. Alas ! a heart of less purity would not have so fatally misled thee ! yes, the honour of thy heart has been our ruin ; the upright sentiments which fill thy breast, have banished discretion. You would endeavour to reconcile filial tenderness with unconquerable love ; by attempting to gratify all your inclinations, you confound instead of conciliating them, and your very virtue renders you guilty. O Eloisa, how incredible is your power ! by what strange magick do you fascinate my reason ! even while you endeavour to make me blush at our passion, you have the art to appear amiable in your very failings. You force me to admire you, even while I partake of your remorse——your remorse !——does it become you to feel remorse ?——you, whom I loved——you, whom I shall never cease to adore——can guilt ever approach your spotless heart ?——O cruel Eloisa ! if you mean to restore the heart which belongs to me alone, return

turn it to me such as it was, when you first bestowed it.

What do you tell me?—will you venture to intimate——you, fall into the arms of another?——shall another possess you?——will you be no longer mine?——or, to complete my horror, will you not be solely mine?—I—shall I suffer such dreadful punishment?——shall I see you survive yourself?——no, I had rather lose you entirely, than share you with another.——Why has not heaven armed me with courage equal to the rage which distracts me?——sooner than *thy* hand should debase itself by a fatal union which love abhors, and honour condemns, I would interpose my own, and plunge a poignard in thy breast. I would drain thy chaste heart of blood which infidelity never tainted: with that spotless blood I would mix my own, which burns in my veins with inextinguishable ardour; I would fall in thy arms; I would yield my last breath on thy lips——I would receive thine——How! Eloisa expiring! those lovely eyes closed by the horrors of death!——that breast, the throne of love, mangled by my hand, and pouring forth copious streams of blood and life!——No, live and suffer, endure the punishment of my cowardice. No, I wish thou wert no more, but my passion is not so violent as to stab thee. O, that you did but know the state of my heart, which is ready to burst with anguish! Never did it burn with so pure a flame. Never were your innocence and virtue so dear to me. I am a lover, I know how to prize an amiable object, I am sensible that I do: but I am no
more

more than man, and it is not in human power to renounce supreme felicity. One night, one single night, has made a thorough change in my soul. Preserve me, if thou can'st, from that dangerous recollection, and I am virtuous still. But the remembrance of that fatal night is sunk to the bottom of my soul, and will darken all the rest of my days. O Eloisa, thou most adorable object! if we must be wretched for ever, yet let us enjoy one hour of transport, and then resign ourselves to eternal lamentations.

Listen to the man who loves you. Why should we alone affect to be wiser than the rest of mankind, and pursue, with puerile simplicity, those chimerical virtues, which all the world talks of, and no one practises. What! shall we pretend to be greater moralists than the crowd of philosophers which people London and Paris, who all laugh at conjugal fidelity, and treat adultery as a jest? instances of this nature are far from being scandalous; we are not at liberty even to censure them, and people of spirit would laugh at a man who should stifle the affections of his heart out of respect to matrimony. In fact, say they, an injury which only consists in opinion, is no injury while it remains secret. What injury does a husband receive from an infidelity to which he is a stranger? by how many obliging condescensions, does a woman compensate for her failings*? what endearments she employs to prevent,

* Where did the honest Swiss learn this? women of gaiety have long since assumed more imperious airs.

vent, and to remove his suspicions? deprived of an imaginary good, he actually enjoys more real felicity, and this supposed crime which makes such a noise, is but an additional tie, which secures the peace of society.

O God forbid, thou dear partner of my soul, that I should wish to preserve thy affections by such shameful maxims. I abhor them, though I am not able to confute them, and my conscience is a better advocate than my reason. Not that I pride myself upon a spirit which I detest, or that I am fond of a virtue bought so dear: but I think it less criminal to reproach myself with my failings, than to attempt to vindicate them, and I consider an endeavour to stifle remorse, as the strongest degree of guilt.

I know not what I write. I find my mind in a horrid state, much worse than it was, even before I received your letter. The hope you tender me, is gloomy and melancholy; it totally extinguishes that pure light, which has so often been our guide; your charms are blasted, and yet appear more affecting; I perceive that you are affectionate and unhappy: my heart is overwhelmed with the tears which flow from your eyes, and I vent bitter reproaches on

airs. They begin by boldly introducing their lovers into the house, and if they permit their husbands to continue there, it is only while they behave towards them with proper respect. A woman who should take pains to conceal a criminal intrigue, would shew that she was ashamed, and would be despised; not one female of spirit would take notice of her.

myself,

myself, for having presumed to taste a happiness, which I can no longer enjoy, but at the hazard of your peace.

Nevertheless I perceive that a secret ardour fires my soul, and revives that courage which my remorse has subdued. Ah, lovely Eloisa, do you know how many losses a love like mine can compensate? do you know how far a lover, who only breathes for you, can make your life agreeable? are you sensible that it is for you alone I wish to live, to move, to think? no, thou delicious source of my existence, I will have no soul but thine, I will no longer be any thing but a part of thy lovely self, and you will meet with such a kind reception in the inmost recesses of my heart, that you will never perceive any decay in your charms. Well, we shall be guilty, yet we will not be wicked; we shall be guilty, yet we will be in love with virtue: so far from attempting to palliate our failings, we will deplore them; we will lament together; if possible, we will work our redemption, by being good and benevolent. Eloisa! O Eloisa! what will you do? what can you do? thou canst never disengage thyself from my heart: is it not espoused to thine?

I have long since bid adieu to those vain prospects of fortune which so palpably deluded me. I now solely confine my attention to the duties I owe Lord B——; he will force me with him to England; he imagines I can be of service to him there. Well, I will attend him. But I will steal away once every year; I will come in secret to visit you. If I cannot speak to you, at least I shall have the pleasure of
gazing

gazing on you ; I may at least kiss your footsteps ; one glance from your eyes will support me ten months. When I am forced to return, and retire from her I love, it will be some consolation to me, to count the steps which will bring me back again. These frequent journies will be some amusement to your unhappy lover ; when he sets out to visit you, he will anticipate the pleasure of beholding you ; the remembrance of the transports he has felt, will enchant his imagination during his absence ; in spite of his cruel destiny, his melancholy time will not be utterly lost ; every year will be marked with some tincture of pleasure, and the short-lived moments he passes near you, will be multiplied during his whole life.

L E T T E R CX.

From Mrs. O R B E.

YOUR mistress is no more ; but I have recovered my friend, and you too have gained one, whose affection will more than recompense your loss. Eloisa is married, and her merit is sufficient to make the gentleman happy, who has blended his interest with hers. After so many indiscretions, you ought to thank heaven which has preserved you both, her from ignominy, and you from the regret of having dishonoured her. Reverence her change of condition ; do not write to her, she desires you will not. Wait till she writes to you, which she will shortly do.
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Now is the time to convince me that you merit that esteem I ever entertained for you, and that your heart is susceptible of a pure and disinterested friendship.

L E T T E R LXI.

From ELOISA.

I Have been so long accustomed to make you the confidant of all the secrets of my soul, that it is not in my power to discontinue so agreeable a correspondence. In the most important occurrences of life I long to disclose my heart to you. Open yours; my beloved friend, to receive what I communicate; treasure up in your mind the long discourse of friendship, which, though it sometimes renders the speaker too diffusive, always makes the friendly hearer patient.

Attached to the fortune of a husband, or rather to the will of a parent, by an indissoluble tie, I enter upon a new state of life, which death alone can terminate: let us for a moment cast our eyes on that I have quitted; the recollection of former times cannot be painful to us. Perhaps it will afford some lessons, which will teach me how to make a proper use of the time to come: perhaps it will open some lights which may serve to explain those particulars of my conduct, which always appeared mysterious in your eyes. At least, by reflecting on the relation in which we lately stood to each other, our hearts

will become more sensible of the reciprocal obligations from which death alone can release us.

It is now near six years since I first saw you. You was young, genteel, and agreeable. I had seen others more comely, and more engaging; but no one ever excited in me the least emotion, and my heart surrendered itself to * you on the first interview. I imagin'd that I saw, in your countenance, the traces of a soul which seemed the counterpart of mine. I thought that my senses only served as organs to more refined sentiments; and I loved in you not so much what I saw, as what I imagined I felt within myself. It is not two months since, that I still flattered myself I was not mistaken: blind Love, said I, was in the right; we were made for each other, if human events do not interrupt the affinity of nature; and if we are allowed to enjoy felicity in this life, we shall certainly be happy together.

These sentiments were reciprocal; I should have been deceived, had I entertained them alone. The love I felt, could not arise but from a mutual conformity and harmony of souls. We never love, unless we are beloved; at least our passion is short-lived. Those affections which meet with no return, and which are supposed to make so many wretched, are only

* Mr. Richardson makes a jest of these attachments formed at first sight, and founded on an unaccountable congeniality of nature. It is easy to laugh at these attachments; but as too many of this kind take place, instead of entertaining ourselves with controverting them, would it not be better to teach us how to conquer them?

founded

founded on sensuality; if ever they penetrate the heart, it is by means of some false resemblance, and the mistake is quickly discovered. Sensual love cannot subsist without fruition, and dies with it: the sublimer passion cannot be satisfied without engaging the heart, and is as permanent as the analogy which gave it birth*. Such was ours from the beginning; and such, I hope, it will ever be to the end of our days. I perceived, I felt that I was beloved, and that I merited your affection. My lips were silent, my looks were constrained; but my heart explained itself: we quickly experienced I know not what, which renders silence eloquent, which gives utterance to the downcast eye, which occasions a kind of forward bashfulness which discovers the tumult of desire through the veil of timidity, and conveys ideas which it dares not express.

I perceived the situation of my heart, and gave myself over for lost, the first word you spoke. I found what pain your reserve cost you. I approved of the distance you observed, and admired you the more; I endeavoured to recompense you for such a necessary and painful silence, without prejudice to my innocence; I offered violence to my natural disposition; I imitated my cousin; I became, like her, arch and lively, to avoid too serious explanations, and to indulge a thousand tender caresses, under cover of that affected sprightliness. I took such pains to make your situation agreeable, that the ap-

* Admitting the analogy to be chimerical, yet it lasts as long as the illusion, which makes us suppose it real.

prehensions of a change increased your reserve. This scheme turned to my disadvantage : we generally suffer for assuming a borrowed character. Fool that I was ! I accelerated my ruin, instead of preventing it ; I employed poison as a palliative, and what should have induced you to preserve silence, was the occasion which tempted you to explain yourself. In vain did I attempt, by an affected indifference, to keep you at a distance in our private interviews ; that very constraint betrayed me : you wrote. Instead of committing your first letter to the fire, or delivering it to my mother, I ventured to open it. That was my original crime, and all the rest was a necessary consequence of that first fault. I endeavoured to avoid answering those fatal letters, which I could not forbear reading. This violent struggle affected my health. I saw the abyss in which I was going to plunge. I looked upon myself with horror, and could not resolve to endure your absence. I fell into a kind of despair ; I had rather that you had ceased to live, than not to live for me : I even went so far as to wish, and to desire your death. Heaven knew my heart ; these efforts may make amends for some failings.

Finding you disposed to implicit obedience, I was determined to speak. Challiot had given me some instructions, which made me too sensible of the danger of avowing my passion. But love, which extorted the confession, taught me to elude its consequence. You was my last resort ; I had such an entire confidence in you, that I furnished you with arms against my weakness ; such was my opinion of your integrity, that I
trusted

trusted you would preserve me from myself, and I did you no more than justice. When I found the respect you paid to so valuable a trust, I perceived that my passion had not blinded me in my opinion of those virtues with which I supposed you endowed. I resigned myself with greater security, as I imagined that we should both of us be contented with a sentimental affection. As I discovered nothing at the bottom of my heart but sentiments of honour, I tasted without reserve, the charms of such a delightful intimacy. Alas! I did not perceive that my disorder grew inveterate from inattention, and that habit was still more dangerous than love. Being sensibly affected by your reserve, I thought I might relax mine without any risk; in the innocence of my desires, I hoped to lead you to the heights of virtue, by the tender caresses of friendship. But the grove at Clarens soon convinced me that I trusted myself too far, and that we ought not to grant the least indulgence to the senses, where prudence forbids us to gratify them entirely. One moment, one single moment, fired me with a desire which nothing could extinguish; and if my will yet resisted, my heart was from that time corrupted.

You partook of my distraction; your letter made me tremble. The danger was double: to preserve me from you and from myself, it was necessary to banish you. This was the last effort of expiring virtue; but by your flight, you made your conquest sure, and when I saw you no more, the languor your absence occasioned,

deprived me of the little strength I had left to resist you.

When my father quitted the service, he brought M. Wolmar home with him. His life which he owed to him, and an intimacy of twenty years, rendered this friend so dear, that he could never part from him. M. Wolmar was advanced in years, and though of high birth, had met with no woman who had fixed his affections. My father mentioned me to him, as to a man whom he wished to call his son: he was desirous to see me, and it was with this intent they came together. It was my fate to be agreeable to him, who never was susceptible of any impression before. They entered into secret engagements, and M. Wolmar, who had some affairs to settle in one of the northern courts, where his family and fortune were, desired time, and took leave upon their mutual engagement. After his departure, my father acquainted my mother and me, that he designed him for my husband; and commanded me, with a tone which cut off all reply from my timidity, to prepare myself to receive his hand. My mother, who too plainly perceived the inclinations of my heart, and who had a natural liking for you, made several attempts to shake my father's resolution; she durst not absolutely propose you, but she spoke of you in such terms as she hoped might make my father esteem you, and wish to be acquainted with you; but your rank in life made him insensible to all your accomplishments; and though he allowed that high birth could not supply

supply them, yet he maintained that birth alone could make them of any value.

The impossibility of being happy, fanned the flame which it ought to have extinguished. A flattering delusion had supported me under all my troubles; when that was gone, I had no strength to oppose them. While I had the least hope of being yours, I might have triumphed over my inclinations; it would have cost me less to have spent my whole life in resistance, than to renounce you for ever; and the very idea of an everlasting opposition, deprived me of fortitude to subdue my passion.

Grief and love preyed upon my heart; I fell into a state of dejection, which you might perceive in my letters: yours, which you wrote to me from Meillerie, completed my affliction; to the measure of my own troubles, was added the sense of your despair. Alas! the weakest mind is always destined to bear the troubles of both. The scheme you ventured to propose to me, put the finishing stroke to my perplexity. Misery seemed to be the infallible lot of my days, the inevitable choice which remained for me to make, was to add to it either your infelicity or that of my parents. I could not endure the horrible alternative; the power of nature has its bounds; such agitations overpowered my strength. I wished to be delivered from life. Heaven seemed to take pity of me; but cruel death spared me for my destruction. I saw you, I recovered, and was undone.

If my failings did not contribute to my felicity, I was not disappointed: I never considered them as the means to procure happiness. I per-

ceived that my heart was formed for virtue, without which I could never be happy; I fell through weakness, not from error; I had not even blindness to plead in excuse for my frailty. I was bereaved of every hope; it was impossible for me to be otherwise than unfortunate. Innocence and love were equally requisite to my peace: as I could not preserve them both, and was witness to your distraction, I consulted your interest alone in the choice I made, and to save you, ruined myself.

But it is not so easy, as many imagine, to forsake virtue. She continues for some time, to torment those who abandon her; and her charms, which are the delight of refined souls, constitute the chief punishment of the wicked, who are condemned to be in love with her when they can no longer enjoy her. Guilty, yet not depraved, I could not escape the remorse which pursued me; honour was dear to me, even after it was gone; though my shame was secret, it was not less grievous; and though the whole world had been witness to it, I could not have been more sensibly affected. I comforted myself under my affliction, like one who having a wound, dreads a mortification; and who, by the sense of pain, is encouraged not to despair of a cure.

Nevertheless, my shameful state was insupportable. By endeavouring to stifle the reproach of guilt, without renouncing the crime, I experienced what every honest mind feels when it goes astray, and is fond of its mistake. A new delusion lent its aid to assuage the bitterness of repentance; I flattered myself, that my frailty would

would afford me the means of repairing my indiscretion, and ventured to form a design of forcing my father to unite our hands. I depended on the first pledge of our love to close this delightful union. I prayed to heaven for offspring as the pledge of my return to virtue, and of our mutual happiness: I wished for it with as much earnestness as another, in my place, would have dreaded it. The tenderness of love, by its soft illusion, allayed the murmurs of my conscience; the effects I hoped to derive from my frailty inspired me with consolation, and this pleasing expectation was all the hope and comfort of my life.

Whenever I should discover evident symptoms of my pregnancy, I was determined to make a publick declaration of my condition to Mr. Perret *, in the presence of the whole family. I am timorous, it is true; I was sensible how dear such a declaration would cost me, but honour itself inspired me with courage, and I chose rather to bear at once the confusion I deserved, than to nourish everlasting infamy at the bottom of my soul. I knew that my father would either doom me to death, or give me to my lover; this alternative had nothing in it terrible to my apprehension, and whatever might be the event, I concluded that this step would put an end to all my sufferings.

This, my dear friend, was the mystery which I concealed from you, and which you endeavoured to penetrate with such solicitous curiosity. A thousand reasons conspired to make me use this reserve with a man of your impe-

* Minister of the parish.

tuosity, not to mention that it would have been imprudent to have furnished you with a new pretence for pressing your indiscreet and importunate application. It was above all things requisite to remove you during such a perilous situation, and I was very sensible that you would never have consented to leave me in such an extremity, had you known my danger.

Alas! I was once more deceived by such a flattering expectation. Heaven refused to favour designs which were conceived in wickedness. I did not deserve the honour of being a mother; my scheme was abortive, and I was even deprived of an opportunity of expiating my frailty, at the expence of my reputation. Disappointed in my hope, the indiscreet assignation which exposed your life to danger, was a rashness which my fond love coloured with this gentle palliation: I imputed the ill success of my wishes to myself, and my heart, misled by its desires, flattered itself that its eagerness to gratify them arose entirely from my anxiety to render them lawful hereafter.

At one time I thought my wishes accomplished: that mistake was the source of my most bitter affliction, and after nature had granted the petition of love, the stroke of destiny came with aggravated cruelty. You know the accident which destroyed my last hopes, together with the fruit of my love. That misfortune happened during our separation, as if heaven at that time intended to oppress me with all the evils I merited, and to separate me at once from every connection which might contribute to our union.

Your

Your departure put an end to my delusion and to my pleasures; I discovered, but too late, the chimeras which had imposed upon me. I perceived that I had fallen into a state truly despicable, and felt myself completely wretched; which was the inevitable consequence of love without innocence, and hopeless desires which I could never extinguish. Tortured by a thousand fruitless griefs, I stifled reflections which were as painful as unprofitable; I no longer looked upon myself as worthy of consideration, and devoted my life to solitude for you: I had no honour, but yours; no hope, but in your happiness, and the sentiments which you communicated were alone capable of affecting me.

Love did not make me blind to your faults, but it made those faults dear to me; and its delusion was so powerful, that, had you been more perfect, I should have loved you less. I was no stranger to your heart, or your impetuosity of temper. I was sensible, that with more courage than I, you had less patience, and that the afflictions which oppressed my soul, would drive yours to despair. It was for this reason I always carefully kept my father's promise a secret from you, and at our parting, taking advantage of lord B——'s zeal for your interest, and with a view to make you more attentive to your own welfare, flattered you with a hope which I myself did not entertain. Yet more; apprized of the danger which threatened us, I took the only precaution for our mutual security, and by a solemn engagement having made you, as much as possible, master of my will, I

hoped to inspire you with confidence, and myself with fortitude, by means of a promise which I never durst violate, and which might ensure your peace of mind. I own it was a needless obligation, and yet I should never have infringed it. Virtue is so essential to our souls, that when we have once abandoned that which is real, we presently fashion another after the same model, and keep the more strongly attached to this substitute, because, perhaps, it is of our own election.

I need not tell you what perturbation I felt after your departure. The worst of my apprehensions was the dread of being forsaken. The place of your residence made me tremble. Your manner of living increased my terror. I imagined that I already saw you debased into a man of intrigue. An ignominy of this nature touched me more sensibly than all my afflictions; I had rather have seen you wretched than contemptible; after so many troubles to which I had been inured, your dishonour was the only one I could not support.

My apprehensions, which the stile of your letters confirmed, were quickly removed; and that by such means as would have made any other completely uneasy. I allude to the disorderly course of life into which you was seduced, and of which your ready and frank confession was, of all the proofs of your sincerity, that which affected me most sensibly. I knew you too well to be ignorant what such a confession must have cost you, even if I had been no longer dear to you. I perceived that
love

love alone had triumphed over shame, and extorted it from you. I concluded that a heart so sincere, was incapable of disguised infidelity; I discovered less guilt in your failing, than merit in the confession; and calling to mind your former engagements, was entirely cured of jealousy.

And yet, my worthy friend, my cure did not increase my felicity; for one torment less, a thousand others rose up incessantly, and I was never more sensible of the folly of seeking that repose in an unsettled mind which nothing but prudence can bestow. I had for a long time secretly lamented the best of mothers, who insensibly wasted by a fatal decay. Bab, whom the unhappy consequence of my misconduct obliged to make my confidant, betrayed me, and discovered our mutual love, and my frailty, to my mother. I had just received your letters from my cousin, when they were seized. The proofs were too convincing; grief deprived her of the little strength her illness had left her. I thought I should have expired at her feet with remorse. So far from consigning me to the death I merited, she concealed my shame, and was contented to bemoan my fall. Even you, who had so ungratefully abused her kindness, was not odious to her. I was witness to the effect which your letter produced on her tender and affectionate mind. Alas! she wished for your happiness and mine. She attempted more than once — but why should I recall a hope which is now for ever extinguished? heaven decreed it otherwise. She closed her melancholy days with the afflicting consideration
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of being unable to move a rigid husband, and of leaving a daughter behind her so little worthy of such a parent.

Oppressed with such a cruel loss, my soul had no other strength than what it received from that impression; the voice of nature uttered groans which stifled the murmurs of love. I regarded the author of my troubles with a kind of horror. I endeavoured to stifle the detestable passion which had brought them upon me, and to renounce you for ever. This, no doubt, was what I ought to have done: had I not sufficient cause of lamentation the remainder of my days, without being in continual quest of new subjects of affliction? every thing seemed to favour my resolution. If melancholy softens the mind, deep affliction hardens it. The remembrance of my dying mother effaced your image; we were distant from each other; hope had entirely abandoned me; my incomparable friend was never more great or more deserving wholly to engross my heart. Her virtue, her discretion, her friendship, her tender caresses, seemed to have purified it; I thought I had forgotten you, and imagined myself cured. But it was too late; what I took for the indifference of extinguished love, was nothing but the heaviness of despair.

As a sick man who falls into a weak state when free from pain, is suddenly revived by more acute sensations, so I quickly perceived all my troubles renewed when my father acquainted me with Mr. Wolmar's approaching return. Invincible love then gave me incredible strength. For the first time I ventured to oppose my father

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ther to his face. I frankly protested that I could never like Mr. Wolmar; that I was determined to die single; that he was master of my life, but not of my affections, and that nothing could ever make me alter my resolution. I need not describe the rage he was in, nor the treatment I was obliged to endure. I was immoveable; my timidity once vanquished carried me to the other extreme, and if my tone was less imperious than my father's, it was nevertheless equally resolute.

He found that I was determined, and that he should make no impression on me by dint of authority. For a minute I thought myself freed from his persecution. But what became of me, when on a sudden I saw the most rigid father softened into tears, and prostrate at my feet? without suffering me to rise, he embraced my knees, and fixing his streaming eyes on mine, he addressed himself to me in a plaintive voice, which still murmurs in my ears. O my child! have some respect for the grey hairs of your unhappy father; do not send me with sorrow to the grave, after her who bore thee. Will Eloisa be the death of all her family?

Imagine my grief and astonishment. That attitude, that tone, that gesture, those words, that horrible idea, overpowered me to that degree, that I dropped half dead into his arms, and it was not till after repeated sobs, which for some time stifled utterance, that I was able to answer him in a faint and faltering voice: O my father! I was armed against your menaces, but I am not proof against your tears. You will be the death of your daughter.

We

We were both of us in such violent agitation that it was a long while before we recovered. In the mean time, recollecting his last words, I concluded that he was better informed of the particulars of my conduct than I had imagined, and being resolved to turn those circumstances of information against him, I was preparing, at the hazard of my life, to make a confession which I had too long deferred, when he hastily interrupted me, and, as if he had foreseen and dreaded what I was going to declare, spoke to me in the following terms.

“ I know you have encouraged inclinations
“ unworthy a girl of your birth. It is time to
“ sacrifice to duty and honour a shameful passion
“ which you shall never gratify but at the ex-
“ pence of my life. Attend to what your fa-
“ ther’s honour, and your own, require of you,
“ and then determine for yourself.”

“ Mr. Wolmar is of noble extraction, one
“ who is distinguished by all the accomplishments
“ requisite to maintain his dignity; one who
“ enjoys the public esteem, and who deserves it.
“ I am indebted to him for my life; and you
“ are no stranger to the engagement I have con-
“ cluded with him. You are farther to under-
“ stand, that on his return home to settle his con-
“ cerns, he found himself involved by an unfortu-
“ nate turn of affairs: he had lost the greatest part
“ of his estate, and it was by singular good luck
“ that he himself escaped from exile to Siberia:
“ he is coming back with the melancholy wreck
“ of his fortune, upon the strength of his friend’s
“ word, which never yet was forfeited. Tell me
“ now, in what manner I shall receive him on his

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“ return ? shall I say to him ? Sir, I promised you
“ my daughter while you were in affluent cir-
“ cumstances, but now your fortune is ruined I
“ must retract my word, for my daughter will
“ never be yours. If I do not express my refu-
“ sal in these words, it will be interpreted in this
“ manner. To alledge your pre-engagement,
“ will be considered as a pretence, or it will be
“ imputed as an additional disgrace to me, and
“ we shall pass, you for an abandoned girl, and
“ I for a dishonest man, who has sacrificed his
“ word and honour to sordid interest, and has
“ added ingratitude to infidelity. My dear
“ child, I have lived too long now to close
“ an unblemished life with infamy, and sixty
“ years spent with honour are not to be pro-
“ stituted in a quarter of an hour.

“ You perceive therefore,” continued he,
“ how unreasonable is every objection which
“ you can offer. Judge whether the giddy pas-
“ sion of youth, whether attachments which
“ modesty disavows, are to be put in compe-
“ tition with the duty of a child, and the honour
“ by which a parent stands bound. If the dis-
“ pute were, which of us two should fall a vic-
“ tim to the happiness of the other, my tender-
“ ness would challenge the right of making that
“ sacrifice to affection ; but honour, my child,
“ calls upon me, and that always determines the
“ resolution of him whose blood you inherit.”

I was not without a pertinent answer to these remonstrances ; but my father's prejudices confirmed him in his principles, so different from mine, that reason which appeared to me unanswerable, would not have had the least weight
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with him. Besides not knowing whence he had gathered the intelligence he seemed to have gained with respect to my conduct, or how far his information extended; apprehending likewise by his eagerness to interrupt me, that he had formed his resolution with regard to the matter I was going to communicate; and above all, being restrained by a sense of shame which I could never subdue, I rather chose to avail myself of an excuse, which I thought would have greater weight, as it squared more with my father's peculiarity of thinking. I therefore made a frank declaration of the engagement I had made with you; I protested that I would never be false to my word, and that, whatever was the consequence, I would never marry without your consent.

In truth, I was delighted to find that my scruples did not offend him; he reproached me severely for entering into such an engagement, but he made no objection to its validity. So exalted are ideas which a gentleman of honour naturally entertains with regard to the faith of engagements, and so sacred a thing does he esteem a promise! instead of attempting therefore to dispute the force of my obligation to you, he made me write a note which he inclosed in a letter and sent away directly*. With what agitation did I expect your answer! how often did I wish that you might shew less delicacy than you ought! but I knew you too well, however, to doubt your compliance, and was sensible that the more painful you felt the sacrifice required of you, the readier you would be to undergo it.

* See page 170 of the present volume.

Your

Your answer came, it was kept a secret from me during my illness; after my recovery, my fears were confirmed, and I was cut off from all farther excuses. At least, my father declared he would admit of no more, and the dreadful expression he had made use of, gave him such an ascendancy over my will, that he made me swear never to say any thing to M. Wolmar which might make him averse from marrying me; for, he added, that will appear to him like a trick concerted between us, and at all events the marriage must be concluded.

You know, my dear friend, that my constitution, which is strong enough to endure fatigue and inclemency of weather, is not able to resist the violence of passion, and that too exquisite a sensibility is the source of all the evils which have afflicted my mind and body. Whether continued grief had tainted my blood, or whether nature took that opportunity to purify it from the fatal effects of fermentation, however it was, I found myself violently disordered at the end of our conversation. When I left my father's room, I endeavoured to write a line to you, but found myself so ill, that I was obliged to go to bed, from whence I hoped never to rise. You are too well acquainted with the rest. My imprudence led you to indiscretion. You came, I saw you, and thought that I had only beheld you in one of those dreams, which, during my delirium, so often presented your image before me. But when I found that you had really been there, that I had actually seen you, that being resolved to partake of my distemper which you could not cure,

you

you had purposely caught the infection; I could no longer resist this last proof, and finding that the tenderness of your affection survived even hope itself, my love, which I had taken such pains to smother, instantly broke through all restraint, and revived with more ardour than ever. I perceived that I was doomed to love in spite of myself; I was sensible that I must be guilty; that I could neither resist my father nor my love, and that I could never reconcile the rights of love and consanguinity, but at the expence of honour. Thus all my noble sentiments were utterly extinguished; all my faculties were altered; guilt was no longer horrible in my sight; I felt a thorough change within me; at length the unruly transports of a passion, rendered impetuous by opposition, threw me into the most dismal dejection with which human nature was ever oppressed; I even dared to despair of virtue. Your letter, which was rather calculated to awaken remorse than to stifle it, put the finishing stroke to my distraction. My heart was so far depraved, that my reason could not withstand the arguments of your plausible philosophy. Such horrible ideas crowded into my mind, as it had never been tainted with before. My will still opposed them, but my imagination grew familiar with them, and if my soul did not harbour anticipated guilt, yet I was no longer mistress of that noble resolution which alone is capable of resisting temptation.

I am scarce able to proceed. Let me stop a while. Recall to your mind those days of innocence and felicity, when the lively and tender passion with which we were mutually animated,
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only served to refine our sentiments, when that holy ardour contributed to render modesty more lovely, and honour more amiable, when our very desires seemed kindled only that we might have the glory of subduing them, and of rendering ourselves more worthy of each other. Look over our first letters; reflect on those moments so fleeting and so little enjoyed, when love appeared to us arrayed in all the charms of virtue, and when we were too fond of each other to enter into any connections which she condemned.

What were we then, and what are we now? Two tender lovers spent a whole year together in painful silence; they scarce ventured to breathe a sigh, but their hearts understood each other; they thought their sufferings great, but, had they known it, they were happy. Their mutual silence was so intelligible, that at length they ventured to converse; but, satisfied with the power of triumphing over their inclinations, and with giving each other the glorious proofs of their victory, they passed another year in a reserve scarce less severe; they imparted their troubles to each other, and were happy. But these violent struggles were too painful to be supported long; one moment's weakness led them astray; they forgot themselves in their transports; but if they were no longer chaste, they were still constant; at least, heaven and nature authorized the ties which united them; at least virtue was still dear to them; they still loved and honoured her charms; they were less corrupted than debased. Though they were less worthy of felicity, they still continued happy.

What

What now are those affectionate lovers who glowed with so refined a passion, and were so sensible of the worth of honour? who can be acquainted with their condition, without sighing over them?—behold them a prey to guilt. Even the idea of defiling the marriage-bed does not now strike them with horror—they meditate adultery!—how, is it possible that they can be the same pair? Are not their souls entirely altered? how could that lovely image, which the wicked never behold, be effaced in the minds where it once shone so bright? are not they, who have once tasted of the charms of virtue, for ever after disgusted with vice? how many ages have passed to produce this astonishing alteration? what length of time could be capable of destroying so delightful a remembrance, and of extinguishing the true sense of happiness in those who had once enjoyed it? Alas! if the first step of irregularity moves with slow and painful pace, how easy and precipitate are those which follow! How great is the illusion of passion! it is that which fascinates reason, betrays prudence, and new models nature before we perceive the change. A single moment leads us astray; a single step draws us out of the right path. From that time an irresistible propensity hurries us on to our ruin. From that time we fall into a gulph, and arise frightened to find ourselves oppressed with crimes, with hearts formed for virtue. My dear friend, let us drop the curtain. Can it be necessary to see the dangerous precipice it conceals from us, in order to avoid approaching it? I resume my narrative.

M. Wolmar arrived, and made no objection to the alteration in my features. My father pressed me. The mourning for my mother was just over, and my grief was proof against time. I could form no pretence to elude my promise; and was under a necessity of fulfilling it. I thought the day which was to separate me for ever from you and from myself, would have been the last of my life. I could have beheld the preparations for my funeral, with less horror than those for my marriage. The nearer the fatal moment drew, the less I found myself able to root out my first affections from my soul; my efforts rather served to inflame than to extinguish them. At length I gave over the fruitless struggle. At the very time that I was prepared to swear eternal constancy to another, my heart still vowed eternal love to thee, and I was carried to the temple as a polluted victim, which defiles the altar on which it is sacrificed.

When I came to the church, I felt, at my entrance, a kind of emotion which I had never experienced before. An inconceivable terror seized my mind in that solemn and august place which was full of the Being worshipped there. A sudden horror made me shiver. Trembling and ready to faint, it was with difficulty I reached the altar. Far from being composed, I found my disorder increase during the ceremony, and every object I beheld struck me with terror. The gloomy light of the temple, the profound silence of the spectators, their decent and collected deportment, the train of all my relations, the awful look of my venerable father, all contributed to give the ceremony an
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air of solemnity which commanded my attention and reverence, and which made me tremble at the very thought of perjury. I imagined that I beheld the instrument of Providence, and that I heard the voice of heaven in the minister who pronounced the holy liturgy with uncommon solemnity. The purity, the dignity, the sanctity of marriage, so forcibly expressed in the words of Scripture, the chaste, the sublime duties it inculcates, and which are so important to the happiness, the order, the peace, the being of human nature, so agreeable in themselves to be observed; all conspired to make such an impression upon me, that I felt a thorough revolution within me. An invisible power seemed suddenly to rectify the disorder of my affections, and to settle them according to the laws of duty and nature. The eternal and omnipresent Power, said I to myself, now reads the bottom of my soul; he compares my secret will with my verbal declaration: heaven and earth are witnesses to the solemn engagement I am going to contract; and they shall be witnesses of my fidelity in observing the obligation. What human duty can they regard, who dare to violate the first and most sacred of all?

A casual glance on Mr. and Mrs. Orbe, who I saw opposite to each other, fixing their tender looks on me, affected me more powerfully than all the other objects around me. O most amiable and virtuous pair! though your love is less violent, are you therefore less closely attached to each other? duty and honour are the bonds which unite you; affectionate friends! faithful couple! you do not burn with that devouring flame which consumes the soul, but you love each

each

each other with a gentle and refined affection, which nourishes the mind, which prudence authorises, and reason directs; you therefore enjoy more substantial felicity. Ah! that, in an union like yours, I could recover the same innocence, and attain the same happiness! if I have not like you deserved it, I will at least endeavour to make myself worthy of it by your example.

These sentiments renewed my hopes, and revived my courage. I considered the sacred tie I was preparing to form, as a new state which would purify my soul, and restore me to a just sense of my duty. When the minister asked me, whether I promised perfect obedience and fidelity to him whom I received for my husband, I made the promise not only with my lips but with my heart; and I will keep it inviolably till my death.

When we returned home, I sighed for an hour's solitude and recollection. I obtained it, not without difficulty; and however eager I was to make the best advantage of it, I nevertheless entered into self-examination with reluctance, being afraid lest I should discover that I had only been affected by some transitory impressions, and that at the bottom I should find myself as unworthy a wife, as I had been an indiscreet girl. The method of making the trial was sure, but dangerous; I began it by turning my thoughts on you. My heart bore witness that no tender recollection had profaned the solemn engagement I had lately made. I could not conceive, without astonishment, how your image could have forborne its obstinate intrusion, and have left me so long at rest, amidst so many occasions which might have recalled you to my mind; I

should have mistrusted my insensibility and forgetfulness, as treacherous dependencies, which were too unnatural to be lasting. I found however that I was in no danger of delusion: I was sensible that I still loved you as much, if not more than ever; but I felt my affection for you without a blush. I found that I could venture to think of you, without forgetting that I was the wife of another. When a tacit self-confession reported how dear you was to me, my heart was affected, but my conscience and my senses were composed; and from that moment I perceived that my mind was changed in reality. What a torrent of pure joy then rushed into my soul! what tranquil sensations, so long effaced, then began to revive a heart which ignominy had stained, and to diffuse an unusual serenity through my whole frame! I seemed as if I had been new born; and fancied that I was entering into another life. O gentle and balmy virtue! I am regenerated for thee; thou alone canst make life dear to me; to thee alone I consecrate my being. Oh! I have too fatally experienced the loss of thee, ever to abandon thee a second time.

In the rapture of so great, so sudden, so unexpected a change, I ventured to reflect on my situation the preceding day: I trembled on thinking on what a state of unworthy debasement I had been reduced by forgetting what I owed to myself; and I shuddered at all the dangers I had run since my first step of deviation. What a happy revolution of mind enabled me to discover the horror of the crime which threw temptation before me; and how did the
love

love of discretion revive within me ! by what uncommon accident, said I, could I hope to be more faithful to love, than to honour, which I held in such high esteem ? what good fortune would prevent your inconstancy or my own, from delivering me a prey to new attachments ? how could I oppose to another lover, that resistance which the first had conquered, and that shame which had been accustomed to yield to inclination ? should I pay more regard to the rights of extinguished love, than I did to the claim of virtue, while it maintained its full empire in my soul ? what security could I have to love no other but you, except that inward assurance which deceives all lovers, who swear eternal constancy, and inconsiderately perjure themselves upon every change of their affections ? thus one deviation from virtue would have led to another ; and vice, grown habitual, would no longer have appeared horrible in my sight. Fallen from honour to infamy, without any hold to stop me ; from a seduced virgin I should have become an abandoned woman, the scandal of my sex and the torment of my family. What has saved me from so natural a consequence of my first transgression ? what checked me after my first guilty step ? what has preserved my reputation, and the esteem of my beloved friends ? what has placed me under the protection of a virtuous and discreet husband, whose character is amiable, whose person is agreeable, and who is full of that respect and affection for me, which I have so little deserved ? what, in short, enables me to aspire after the character of a virtuous wife, and gives me courage to render my-

self worthy of that title? I see, I feel it; it is the friendly hand which has conducted me thro' the paths of darkness, that now removes the veil of error from my eyes; and, in my own despite, restores me to myself. The gentle voice which incessantly murmured within me, now raised its tone, and thundered in my ears, at the very moment that I was near being lost for ever. The author of all truth would not allow me to quit his presence with the conscious guilt of detestable perjury; and preventing my crime by my remorse, hath shewn me the frightful abyss into which I was ready to fall. Eternal Providence! who dost make the insect crawl, and the heavens revolve, thou art watchful over the least of all thy works! thou hast recalled me to that virtue, which I was born to revere! deign therefore to receive from a heart purified by thy goodness, that homage which thou alone hast rendered worthy thy acceptance.

That instant, being impressed with a lively sense of the danger I had escaped, and of the state of honour and security in which I was happily re-established, I prostrated myself on the ground, and lifting my suppliant hands to heaven, I invoked that Being enthroned on high, whose pleasure supports or destroys, by means of our own strength, that free-will he has bestowed. I eagerly, said I, embrace the proffered good, of which Thou alone art the author. I will love the husband to whom thou hast attached me. I will be faithful, because it is the chief duty which unites private families and society in general. I will be chaste, because it is
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the parent virtue which nourishes all the rest. I will adhere to every thing relative to the order of nature which thou hast established, and to the dictates of reason which I derive from thee. I recommend my heart to thy protection, and my desires to thy guidance. Render all my actions conformable to my stedfast will, which is ever thine, and never more permit momentary error to triumph over the settled choice of my life.

Having finished this short prayer, the first I ever made with true devotion, I found myself confirmed in virtuous resolutions; it seemed so easy and so agreeable to follow these dictates, that I clearly perceived where I must hereafter resort for that power to resist my inclinations, which I could not derive from myself. From this new discovery, I acquired fresh confidence, and lamented that fatal blindness, which had so long concealed it from me. I had never been devoid of religion, but perhaps I had better have been wholly so, than to have professed one which was external and mechanical; and which satisfied the conscience, without affecting the heart; one which was confined to set forms; and taught me to believe in God at stated hours, without thinking of him the remainder of my time. Scrupulously attendant on public worship, I nevertheless drew no advantage from it to assist me in the practice of my duty. Knowing that I was of a good family, I indulged my inclinations, was fond of speculation, and put my trust in reason. Not being able to reconcile the Spirit of the Gospel with the manners of the world, nor faith with

works, I steered a middle course which satisfied the vanity of my wisdom: I had one set of maxims for speculation, and another for practice; I forgot in one place, the opinions I formed in another; I was a devotee at church, and a philosopher at home: Alas! I was nothing any where; my prayers were but words, my reasoning mere sophistry, and the only light I followed was the false glimmering of an *ignis fatuus* which guided me to destruction.

I cannot describe to you how much this inward principle, which had escaped me till now, made me despise those which had so shamefully misled me. Tell me, I intreat you, what was the strongest reason in their support, and on what foundation did they rest? A favourable instinct directs me to good, some impetuous passion rises in opposition: it takes root in the same instant, what must I do to destroy it? From a contemplation on the order of nature, I discover the beauty of virtue; and from its general utility, I derive its excellence. But what do these arguments avail, when they stand in competition to my private interest; and which in the end is of most consequence to me, to procure my own happiness at the expence of others, or to promote the felicity of others at the expence of my own happiness? if the dread of shame or punishment deter me from committing evil for the sake of my own private good, I have nothing more to do than to sin in secret; virtue then cannot upbraid me, and if I am detected, I shall be punished, as at Sparta, not on account of my crime, but because I had not ingenuity to conceal it. It short, admitting

ting the character and the love of virtue to be imprinted in my heart by nature, it will serve me as a rule of conduct till its impressions are defaced; but how shall I be sure always to preserve this inward effigie in its original purity, which has no model, among sublunary beings, to which it can be referred? Is it not evident, that irregular affections corrupt the judgment as well as the will, and that conscience itself changes, and in every age, in every people, in every individual, accommodates itself to inconstancy of opinion and diversity of prejudice.

Adore the supreme Being, my worthy and prudent friend; with one puff of breath you will be able to dissipate those chimeras of reason, which have a visionary appearance, and which fly like so many shadows, before immutable truth. Nothing exists but through him, who is self-existent. It is he who directs the tendency of justice, fixes the basis of virtue, and gives a recompense to a short life spent according to his will; it is he who proclaims aloud to the guilty that their secret crimes are detected, and gives assurance to the righteous in obscurity, that their virtues are not without a witness; it is he, it is his unalterable substance, that is the true model of those perfections, of which we all bear the image within us. It is in vain that our passions disfigure it; its traces which are allied to the infinite Being, ever present themselves to our reason, and serve to re-establish what error and imposture have perverted. These distinctions seem to me extremely natural; common sense is sufficient to point them out. Every thing which we cannot separate from the idea

of divine essence, is God; all the rest is the work of men. It is by the contemplation of this divine model, that the soul becomes refined and exalted; that it learns to despise low desires, and to triumph over base inclinations. A heart impressed with these sublime truths, is superior to the mean passions of human nature; the idea of infinite grandeur subdues the pride of man; the delight of contemplation abstracts him from gross desires; and if the immense Being, who is the subject of his thoughts had no existence, it would nevertheless be of use to exercise his mind in such meditations, in order to make him more master of himself, more vigorous, more discreet, and more happy.

Do you require a particular instance of those vain subtleties framed by that self-sufficient reason, which so vainly relies on its own strength? Let us coolly examine the arguments of those philosophers, those worthy advocates of a crime, which never yet seduced any whose minds were not previously corrupted. Might one not conclude that, by a direct attack on the most holy and most solemn of all contracts, those dangerous disputants were determined at one stroke to annihilate human society in general, which is founded on the faith of engagements? But let us consider, I beseech you, how they exculpate secret adultery? it is because, say they, no mischief arises from it; not even to the husband, who is ignorant of the wrong. But, can they be certain that he will always remain ignorant of the injury offered him? is it sufficient to authorise perjury and infidelity, that they do no wrong to others? is the mischief which the
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guilty do to themselves, not sufficient to create an abhorrence of guilt? is it no crime to be false to our word, to destroy, as far as we are able, the obligation of oaths, and the most inviolable contracts? is it no crime to take pains to render ourselves false, treacherous, and perjured? is it no crime to form attachments, which occasion you to desire the prejudice, and to wish the death of another? even the death of one whom we ought to love above others, and with whom we have sworn to live? is not that state in itself an evil, which is productive of a thousand consequential crimes? even good itself, if attended with so many mischiefs, would, for that reason only, be an evil.

Shall one of the parties pretend to innocence, who may chance to be disengaged, and have pledged his faith to no one? He is grossly mistaken. It is not only the interest of husband and wife, but it is the common benefit of mankind, that the purity of marriage be preserved un sullied. Whenever two persons are joined together by that solemn contract, all mankind enter into a tacit engagement to respect the sacred tie, and to honour the conjugal union; and this appears to be a powerful reason against clandestine marriages, which, as they express no public sign of such an union, expose innocent maids to the temptation of adulterous passion. The public are in some measure guarantees of a contract which passes in their presence; and we may venture to say, that the honour of a modest woman is under the special protection of all good and worthy people. Whoever therefore dares to seduce her, is criminal; first,

because he has tempted her to sin, and that every one is an accomplice in those crimes which he persuades others to commit: in the next place, he sins directly himself, because he violates the public and sacred faith of matrimony, without which no order or regularity can subsist in society.

The crime, say they, is secret, consequently no injury can result from it to any one. If these philosophers believe the existence of a God and the immortality of the human soul, can they call that crime secret, which has for its witness the Being principally offended, and the only righteous judge? it is a strange kind of a secret, which is hid from all eyes, except those from which it is our interest most to conceal it! if they do not, however admit of the omnipresence of the Divinity, yet how can they dare to affirm that they do injury to no one? how can they prove that it is a matter of indifference to a parent to educate heirs who are strangers to his blood; to be encumbered perhaps with more children than he would otherwise have had, and to be obliged to distribute his fortune among those pledges of his dishonour, without feeling for them any sensations of parental tenderness, and natural affection. If we suppose these philosophers to be materialists, we have then a stronger foundation for opposing their tenets by the gentle dictates of nature, which plead in every breast against the principles of a vain philosophy, which have never yet been controverted by sound reasoning. In short, if the body alone produces cogitation, and sentiment depends intirely on organization, will there not be a more strict analogy between two beings of the same blood; will they not have

have a more violent attachment to each other, will there not be a resemblance between their souls as well as their features, which is a most powerful motive to inspire mutual affection?

Is it doing no injury therefore, in your opinion, to destroy or disturb this natural union by the mixture of adulterate blood, and to pervert the principle of that mutual affection, which ought to cement all the members of one family? who would not shudder with horror at the thoughts of having one infant changed for another by a nurse? and is it a less crime to make such a change before the infant is born?

If I consider my own sex in particular, what mischiefs do I discover in this incontinency, which is supposed to do no injury! the debasement of a guilty woman, who, after the loss of her honour, soon forfeits all other virtues, is alone sufficient. What manifest symptoms convey to a tender husband the intelligence of that injury which they think to justify by secrecy! the loss of the wife's affection is sufficient proof. To what purpose will all her affected endeavours serve, but to manifest her indifference the more can we impose upon the jealous eye of love by feigned careffes? and what torture must he feel, who is attached to a beloved object, whose hand embraces, while her heart rejects him! Admitting however that fortune should favour a conduct which she has so often betrayed, and to say nothing of the rashness of trusting our own affected innocence and another's peace to precautions which Providence often thinks proper to disconcert—— yet what deceit, what falsehood,

hood, what imposture, is requisite to conceal a criminal commerce, to deceive a husband, to corrupt servants, and to impose upon the public! what a disgrace to the accomplices! what an example to children! what must become of their education amidst so much solicitude how to gratify a guilty passion with impunity! how is the peace of the family and the union of the heads of it to be maintained? what! in all these circumstances does the husband receive no injury? but who can make him recompence for a heart which should have been devoted to him? who can restore him the affections of a valuable woman? who can give him peace of mind, and conjugal confidence! who can cure him of his well-grounded suspicions? who can engage a father to trust the feelings of nature, when he embraces his child?

With regard to the pretended connections which may be formed in families by means of adultery and infidelity, it cannot be considered as a serious argument, but rather as an absurd and brutal mockery, which deserves no other answer than disdain and indignation. The treasons, the quarrels, the battles, the murders with which this irregularity has in all ages pestered the earth, are sufficient proofs how far the peace and union of mankind is to be promoted by attachments founded in guilt. If any social principle results from this vile and despicable commerce, it may be compared to that which unites a band of robbers, and which ought to be destroyed and annulled, in order to ensure the safety of lawful communities.

I have endeavoured to suppress the indignation which these principles excited in me, in order to discuss them with greater moderation. The more extravagant and ridiculous I find them, the more I am interested to refute them, in order to make myself ashamed of having listened to them with too little reserve. You see how ill they can endure the test of sound reason; but from whence can we derive the sacred dictates of reason, if not from him who is the source of all? and what shall we think of those who, in order to mislead mankind, pervert this heavenly ray, which he gave them as an unerring guide to virtue? Let us abandon this philosophy of words; let us distrust a fallacious virtue which undermines all other virtues, and attempts to vindicate every vice, to authorize the practice of every species of guilt. The surest method of discovering our duty is diligently to examine what is right, and we cannot long continue the examination, without recurring to the author of all goodness. This is what I have done, since I have taken pains to rectify my principles, and improve my reason: this is a task you will perform better than I, when you are disposed to pursue the same course. It is a comfort to me to reflect, that you have frequently nourished my mind with elevated notions of religion, and you whose heart disguised nothing from me, would not have talked to me in that strain, had your sentiments differed from your declaration. I recollect with pleasure that conversations of this kind were ever delightful to us. We never found the presence of the supreme Being troublesome: it rather filled us with hope

hope than terror : it never yet dismayed any but guilty souls ; we were pleased to think that he was witness to our interviews, and we loved to exalt our minds to the contemplation of the Deity. If we were now and then abased by shame, we reflected, that at least he was privy to our inmost thoughts, and that idea renewed our tranquillity.

If this confidence led us astray, nevertheless the principle on which it was founded, is alone capable of reclaiming us to virtue. Is it not unworthy of a man to be always at variance with himself, to have one rule for his actions, another for his opinions, to think as if he was abstracted from matter, to act as if he was devoid of soul, and never to be capable of appropriating a single action of his life to his own entire self? for my own part, I think the principles of the antients are sufficient to fortify us, when they are not confined to mere speculation. Weakness is incident to human nature, and the merciful Being who made man frail, will no doubt pardon his frailty ; but guilt is a quality which belongs only to the wicked, and will not remain unpunished by the author of all justice. An infidel, who is otherwise well inclined, practises those virtues he admires ; he acts from taste, not from choice. If all his desires happen to be regular, he indulges them without reserve. He would gratify them in the same manner, if they were irregular ; for what should restrain him? But he who acknowledges and worships the common father of mankind, perceives that he is destined for nobler purposes. An ardent wish to fulfil the end of his being, animates his zeal ; he follows a more certain

tain rule of action than appetite ; he knows how to do what is right at the expence of his inclinations, and to sacrifice the desires of his heart to the call of duty. Such, my dear friend, is the heroic sacrifice required of us both. The love which attached us would have proved the delight of our lives ; it survived hope, it bid defiance to time and absence, it endured every kind of proof. So sincere a passion ought never to have decayed of itself ; it was worthy to be sacrificed to virtue alone.

I must observe farther. All circumstances are altered between us, and your heart must accommodate itself to the change. The wife of Mr. Wolmar is not your Eloisa ; your change of sentiment, with regard to her is unavoidable ; and it depends upon your own choice to make the alteration redound to your honour, according to the election you make of vice or virtue. I recollect a passage in an author, whose authority you will not controvert. Love, says he, is destitute of its greatest charm, when it is abandoned by honour. To be sensible of its true value, it must warm the heart, and exalt us by raising the object of our desires. Take away the idea of perfection, and you deprive love of all its enthusiasm ; banish esteem, and love is no more. How can a woman honour the man whom she ought to despise ? how can he himself honour her, who has not scrupled to abandon herself to a vile seducer ? thus they will soon entertain a mutual contempt for each other. Love, that celestial principle, will be debased into a shameful commerce be-

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tween them. They will have lost their honour without attaining felicity *. This, my dear friend, is our lesson, penned by your own hand! Never were our hearts more agreeably attached, and never was honour so dear to us as in those happy days when this letter was written. Reflect then, how we should be misled at this time by a guilty passion, nourished at the expence of the most agreeable transports which can inspire the soul! The horror of vice which is so natural to us both, would soon extend to the partner of our guilt; we should entertain mutual hatred, for having loved each other indiscreetly, and remorse would quickly extinguish affection. Is it not better to refine a generous sentiment, in order to render it permanent? is it not better at least to preserve what we may grant with innocence? is not this preserving what is more delightful than all other enjoyments? yes, my dear and worthy friend, to keep our love inviolable, we must renounce each other. Let us forget all that has passed, and continue the lover of my soul. This idea is so agreeable that it compensates for every thing.

Thus have I drawn a faithful picture of my life, and given you a genuine detail of every inward sentiment. Be assured that I love you still. I am still attached to you with such a tender and lively affection, that any other than myself would be alarmed: but I feel a principle of a different kind within me, which secures me against any apprehensions from such an attachment. I perceive that the nature of my affec-

* See the first Vol. Letter 24.

tion is entirely altered, and in this respect, my past failings are the grounds of my present security. I know that scrupulous decorum and the parade of virtue might require more of me, and not be satisfied unless I utterly forgot you. But I have a more certain rule of conduct, and will abide by it. I attend to the secret dictates of conscience; I find nothing there which reproaches me, and it never deceives those who consult it with sincerity. If this be not sufficient to justify me before the world, it is enough to restore me to composure of mind. How has this happy change been produced? I know not how. All I know is, that I wished for it most ardently. God alone has accomplished the rest. I am convinced that a mind once corrupted, will ever remain so, and will never recover of itself, unless some sudden revolution, some unexpected change of fortune and condition, entirely alters its connections. When all its habits are destroyed, and all its passions modified, by that thorough revolution, it sometimes resumes its primitive character, and becomes like a new being recently formed by the hands of nature. Then the recollection of its former unworthiness may serve as a preservative against relapse. Yesterday we were base and abject; to day we are spirited and magnanimous. By thus making a close comparison between the two different states, we become more sensible of the value of that which we have recovered, and more attentive to support it.

My marriage has made me experience something like the change I endeavour to explain to you. This tie, which I dreaded so
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much, has extricated me from a slavery much more dreadful; and my husband becomes dearer to me, for having restored me to myself.

You and I were, however, too closely attached, for a change of this kind, to destroy the union between us. If you lose an affectionate mistress, you gain a faithful friend; and whatever we may have imagined in our state of delusion, I cannot believe that the alteration is to your prejudice. Let it, I conjure you, encourage you to take the same resolution that I have formed, to become hereafter more wise and virtuous, and to refine the lessons of philosophy, by the precepts of christian morality. I shall never be thoroughly happy, unless you likewise enjoy happiness, and I am more convinced than ever, that there is no real felicity without virtue. If you sincerely love me, afford me the agreeable consolation to find that our hearts correspond in their return to virtue, as they unhappily agreed in their deviation from it.

I need not make any apology for the length of this epistle. Were you less dear to me, I should have shortened it. Before I conclude, I have one favour to request of you. M. Wolmar is a stranger to my past conduct; but a frank-sincerity is part of the duty I owe to him; I should have made the confession a hundred times; you alone have restrained me. Though I am acquainted with M. Wolmar's discretion and moderation, yet to mention your name, is always to bring you in competition, and I would not do it without your consent. Can this request be disagreeable to you, and when I flatter myself to obtain your leave, do I depend

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too much on you or on myself? consider, I beseech you, that this reserve is inconsistent with innocence, that it grows every day more insupportable, and that I shall not enjoy a moment's rest till I receive your answer.

L E T T E R CXII.

To E L O I S A.

AND wilt thou no longer be my Eloisa? ah! do not tell me so, thou most worthy of all thy sex! Thou art more mine than ever. Thy merit claims homage from the whole world. It was thee whom I adored, when I first became susceptible of the impressions of beauty: and I shall never cease to adore thee, even after death, if my soul still retains any recollection of those truly celestial charms, which were my sole delight when living. The courageous effort by which you have recovered all your virtue, renders you more equal to your lovely self. No, whatever torment the sensation and the confession give me, yet I must declare that you never were my Eloisa more perfectly, than at this moment in which you renounce me. Alas! I regain my Eloisa, by losing her for ever. But I, whose heart shudders even at an attempt to imitate your virtue; I, who am tormented with a criminal passion which I can neither support nor subdue, am I the man I vainly imagined myself to be? was I worthy of your esteem? what right had I to importune you with my complaints

plaints and my despair? did it become me, to presume to sigh for you? Ah! what was I, that I should dare to love Eloisa?

Fool that I am! as tho' I did not feel myself sufficiently humbled, without taking pains to seek fresh circumstances of humiliation! why should I increase my mortification by enumerating distinctions unknown to love? It was that which exalted me; and which made me your equal. Our hearts were blended, we shared our sentiments in common, and mine partook of the elevation of yours. Behold me now sunk into my pristine baseness! Thou gentle hope, which didst so long feed my soul to deceive me, art thou then extinguished without a prospect of return? will she not be mine? must I lose her for ever? does she make another happy? — O rage! O torments of hell! — O faithless! ought you ever? — pardon me, pardon me! dearest madam! have pity on my distraction. O! you had too much reason when you told me, she is no more — She is indeed no more that affectionate Eloisa, to whom I could disclose every emotion of my heart. How could I complain when I found myself unhappy? could she listen to my complaints? was I unhappy? — what then am I now? No, I will not make you blush for yourself or me. Hope is no more, we must renounce each other; we must part. Virtue herself has pronounced the decree; and your hand has been capable of transcribing it. Let us forget each other — Forget me, at least. I am determined, I swear, that I will never speak to you of myself again.

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May I yet venture to talk of you, and to interest myself in what is now the only object of my concern; I mean your happiness? In describing to me the state of your mind, you say nothing of your present situation. As a reward of the sacrifice I have made, of which you ought to be sensible, at least deign to deliver me from this insupportable doubt. Eloisa, are you happy? if you are, give me the only comfort of which my despair is susceptible; if you are not, be compassionate enough to tell me so; my misery then will be less durable.

The more I reflect on the confession you propose to make, the less I am inclined to consent to it, and the same motive which always deprived me of resolution to deny your requests, renders me inexorable in this particular. It is a subject of the last importance, and I conjure you to weigh my reasons with attention. First, your excessive delicacy seems to lead you into a mistake, and I do not see on what foundation the most rigid virtue can exact such a confession from you. No engagement whatever can have any retro-active effect. We cannot bind ourselves with respect to time past, nor promise what is not our power to perform! how can you be obliged to give your husband an account of the use you formerly made of your liberty, or how can you be responsible to him for a fidelity which you never promised to him? Do not deceive yourself, Eloisa; it is not to your husband, it is to your friend, that you have violated your engagement. Before we were separated by your father's tyranny, heaven and nature had formed us for each other, By entering

tering into other connections, you have been guilty of a crime, which love and honour can never forgive; and it is I who have a right to reclaim the prize, which M. Wolmar has ravished from my arms.

If, under any circumstances, duty can exact such a confession, it is when the danger of a relapse obliges a prudent woman to take precautions for her security. But your letter has given me more light into your real sentiments than you imagine. In reading it, I felt in my own heart, how much yours, upon a near approach, nay even in the bosom of love, would have abhorred a criminal connection, the horror of which was only diminished by its distance.

As duty and honour do not require such confidence, prudence and reason forbid it; for it is running a needless risk of forfeiting every thing that is dear in wedlock, the attachment of a husband, mutual confidence, and the peace of the family. Have you thoroughly weighed the consequences of such a step? are you sufficiently acquainted with your husband, to be certain of the effect it will produce in his disposition? do you know how many men there are, who, from such a confession, would conceive an immoderate jealousy, and an invincible contempt, and would probably be provoked, even to attempt your life? in such a nice examination, we ought to attend to time, place, and the difference of characters. In the country where I reside at present, such a confidence would be attended with no danger; and they who make so light of conjugal fidelity, are not people to be violently affected by any frailty
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of conduct prior to the engagement. Not to mention reasons which sometimes render those confessions indispensable, and which cannot be applied to your case, I know some women of tolerable estimation, who, with very little risk, have made a merit of that kind of sincerity, in order perhaps by that sacrifice, to obtain a confidence which they might afterwards abuse at will. But in those countries where the sanctity of marriage is more respected, in those countries where that sacred tie forms a solid union, and where husbands have a real attachment to their wives, they require a more severe account of their conduct; they expect that their hearts should never have felt any tender affections but for themselves; usurping a right which they have not, they unreasonably expect their wives to have been theirs, even before they belonged to them, and they are as unwilling to excuse an abuse of liberty, as a real infidelity.

Believe me, virtuous Eloisa, and distrust this fruitless and unnecessary zeal. Keep this dangerous secret, which nothing can oblige you to reveal; the discovery of which might utterly ruin you, without being of any advantage to your husband. If he is worthy of such a confession, it will disturb his peace of mind; and you will have the mortification of having afflicted him without reason; if he is unworthy, why will you give him a pretence for using you ill? How do you know whether your virtue, which has defended you from the assaults of your heart, will likewise support you against the influence of domestic troubles daily reviving? Do not voluntarily increase your misfortunes,
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lest they become too powerful for your resistance, and you should at length relapse by means of your scruples into a worse condition, than that from which you have with so much difficulty disengaged yourself. Prudence is the basis of every virtue; consult that, I intreat you, in this most important crisis of your life; and if the fatal secret oppresses you so violently, wait at least, before you unbosom yourself, till time and a length of years, shall have made you more perfectly acquainted with your husband: stay till his heart, now affected by the power of your beauty, shall be susceptible of those more lasting impressions, which the charms of your disposition cannot fail to make, and till he is become habitually sensible of your perfections. After all, if these reasons, powerful as they are, should not convince you, yet do not refuse to listen to the voice which utters them. O Eloisa, hearken to a man, who is yet, in some degree, susceptible of virtue, and who has a right to expect some concession from you at least, in return for the sacrifice he has made to you to-day.

I must conclude this letter. I find that I cannot forbear resuming a strain, to which you must no longer give ear. Eloisa, I must part with you! young as I am, am I already destined to renounce felicity? O time, never to be recalled! time irrevocably past, source of everlasting sorrows! pleasures, transports, delightful extasies, delicious moments, celestial raptures! my love, my only love, the honour and delight of my soul! farewell for ever.

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L E T T E R · CXIII.

From E L O I S A.

YOU ask me, whether I am happy? The question affects me, and by your manner of asking it, you facilitate my answer; for so far from wishing to banish you from my memory as you desire me, I confess that I should not be happy was your affection for me to cease: yet at present I am happy in most respects, and nothing but your felicity is wanting to complete mine. If, in my last, I avoided making any mention of Mr. Wolmar, it was out of tenderness to you. I was too well acquainted with your sensibility of temper, not to be under apprehensions of irritating your pain; but your solicitude with regard to my felicity, obliging me to mention him on whom it depends, I cannot speak of him without doing justice to his worth, as becomes his wife, and a friend to truth.

Mr. Wolmar is near fifty years of age; but by means of an uniform regular course of life, and a serenity not ruffled by any violent passions, he has preserved such a healthy constitution, and such a florid complexion, that he scarce appears to be forty, and he bears no symptoms of age, but prudence and experience. His countenance is noble and engaging, his address open and unaffected, his manner rather sincere than courteous, he speaks little and with great judgment, but without any affectation of being concise and sententious. His behaviour is the same to every one, he neither courts nor shuns any individual,

dividual, and he never gives any preference but what reason justifies.

In spite of his natural indifference, his heart, seconding my father's inclinations, entertained a liking for me, and for the first time formed a tender attachment. This moderate and lasting affection has been governed by such strict rules of decorum, and observed such a constant uniformity, that he was under no necessity of altering his manners on changing his condition, and, without violating conjugal decorum, his behaviour to me now is the same as it was before marriage. I never saw him either gay or melancholy, but always contented; he never talks to me of himself, and seldom of me; he is not in continual search after me, but he does not seem displeased that I should seek his company, and he seems to part from me unwillingly. He is serious without disposing others to be grave; on the contrary, his serenity of manners seems an invitation to me to be sprightly; and as the pleasures I relish are the only pleasures of which he is susceptible, an endeavour to amuse myself is among the duties I owe to him. In one word, he wishes to see me happy; he has not told me so, but his conduct declares it; and to wish the happiness of a wife, is to make her really happy.

With all the attention with which I have been able to observe him, I cannot discover any particular passion to which he is attached, except his affection for me; it is however so even and temperate, that one would conclude he had power to limit the degree of his passion, and that he had determined not to love beyond the bounds of discretion. He is in reality what Lord

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B — is in his own imagination ; in this respect I find him greatly preferable to those passionate lovers, of whom we are so fond ; for the heart deceives us a thousand ways, and acts from a suspicious principle ; but reason always proposes a just end ; the rules of duty which it enjoins are sure, evident and practicable ; and whenever our reason is led astray we enter into idle speculations, which were never intended to be objects of her examination.

Mr. Wolmar's chief delight is observation. He loves to judge of mens characters and actions. He generally forms his judgment with great impartiality and profound penetration. If an enemy were to do him an injury, he would discuss every motive and expedient with as much composure, as if he was transacting any indifferent concern. I do not know by what means he has heard of you, but he has often spoken of you, with great esteem, to me ; and I am sure he is incapable of disguise. I have imagined sometimes that he took particular notice of me during these conversations ; but in all probability, the observation I apprehended, was nothing but the secret reproach of an alarmed conscience. However it be, in this respect I did my duty ; neither fear nor shame occasioned me to shew an unjust reserve ; and I did you justice before him, as I now do him justice before you.

I forgot to tell you concerning our income, and the management of it. The wreck of Mr. Wolmar's inheritance, with the addition from my father, who has only reserved a pension for himself, makes up a handsome and moderate
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fortune, which Mr. Wolmar uses with generosity and discretion, by maintaining in his family, not an inconvenient and vain display of luxury*, but plenty, with the real conveniencies of life; and by distributing necessaries among his indigent neighbours. The œconomy he has established in his household, is the image of that order which reigns in his own breast; and his little family seems to be a model of that regularity, which is observable in the government

* No association is more common than pride and stinginess. We take from nature, from real pleasures, nay from the stock of necessaries, what we lavish upon opinion. One man adorns his palace at the expence of his kitchen: another prefers a fine service of plate to a good dinner: a third makes a sumptuous entertainment, and starves himself the rest of the year. When I see a side-board richly decorated, I expect the wine to be very indifferent. How often in the country, when we breathe the fresh morning air, are we tempted by the prospect of a fine garden? we rise early, and by walking gain a keen appetite, which makes us wish for breakfast. Perhaps the domestic is out of the way, or provisions are wanting, or the lady has not given her orders, and you are tired to death with waiting. Sometimes people prevent your desires, and make you a very pompous offer of every thing, upon condition that you accept of nothing. You must fast till three o'clock, or breakfast with the tulips. I remember to have walked in a very beautiful park, which belonged to a lady, who tho' extremely fond of coffee, never drank any but when it was at a very low price; yet she very liberally allowed her gardener a salary of a thousand crowns. For my part, I should chuse to have tulips less finely variegated, and to drink coffee whenever my appetite called for it.

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of the world. You neither discover that inflexible formality which is rather inconvenient than useful, and which no one but he who exacts it can endure; nor do you perceive that mistaken confusion, which, by being encumbered with superfluities, renders every thing useless. The master's hand is seen throughout, without being felt, and he made his first arrangement with so much discretion, that every thing now goes on by itself; and regularity is preserved, without any abridgment of liberty.

This, my worthy friend, is a succinct but faithful account of Mr. Wolmar's character, as far as I have been able to discover it since I lived with him. Such as he appeared to me the first day, such he seemed the last, without any alteration; which induces me to hope that I know him thoroughly, and that I have no farther discoveries to make; for I cannot conceive any change in his behaviour which will not be to his disadvantage.

From this account, you may anticipate the answer to your question, and you must think despicably of me not to suppose me happy, when I have so much reason to be so. What led me into a mistake, and what perhaps still misleads you, is the opinion, that love is necessary to make the married state happy. My good friend, this is a vulgar error; honour, virtue, a certain conformity, not so much of age and condition as of temper and inclination, are the requisites in the conjugal state: nevertheless it must not be inferred from hence that this union does not produce an affectionate attachment, which, though it does not amount to love, is not less

agreeable, and is much more permanent. Love is attended with a continual inquietude of jealousy, or the dread of separation, by no means suitable with a married life, which should be a state of peace and tranquillity. The intent of matrimony is not for man and wife to be always taken up with each other, but jointly to discharge the duties of civil society, to govern their family with prudence, and educate their children with discretion. Lovers attend to nothing but each other, they are incessantly engaged with each other; and all that they regard, is how to shew their mutual affection. But this is not enough for a married pair, who have so many other objects to engage their attention. There is no passion whatever which exposes us to such delusion, as that of love. We take its violence for a symptom of its duration; the heart over-burdened with such an agreeable sensation, extends itself to futurity; and while the heat of love continues, we flatter ourselves that it will never cool. But, on the contrary, it is consumed by its own ardour; it glows in youth, it grows faint with decaying beauty, it is utterly extinguished by the frost of age; and since the beginning of the world, there never was an instance of two lovers who sighed for each other, when they became grey-headed. We may be assured that, sooner or later, adoration will cease; then the idol which we worshipped being demolished, we reciprocally see each other in a true light. We look with surprise, for the object on which we doated; not being able to discover it more. We are displeased with that which remains in its stead, and which our imagination

gination often disfigures, as much as it embellished it before; there are few people, says Rochefoucault, who are not ashamed of having loved each other, when their affection is extinguished. How much is it to be dreaded therefore, lest these too lively sensations should be succeeded by an irksome state of mind, lest their decline instead of stopping at indifference, should even reach absolute disgust; lest, in short, being entirely satiated, they, who were too passionately fond of each other as lovers, should come to hate each other as husband and wife! My dear friend, you always appeared amiable in my eyes, too fatally so for my innocence and repose, but I never yet saw you but in the character of a lover, and how do I know in what light you would have appeared, when your passion was no more? I must confess, that when love expired, it would still have left you in possession of virtue; but is that alone sufficient to make an union happy, which the heart ought to cement? and how many virtuous men have made intolerable husbands? In all these respects, you may say the same of me.

As to Mr. Wolmar, no delusion is the foundation of our mutual liking; we see each other in a true light; the sentiment which unites us is not the blind transport of passionate desire, but a constant and invariable attachment between two rational people, who being destined to pass the remainder of their lives together, are content with their lot, and endeavour to make themselves mutually agreeable. It seems as if we could not have suited each other better, had we been formed on purpose for our union.

Had his heart been as tender as mine, it is impossible but so much sensibility on each side must sometimes have clashed, and occasioned disagreements. If I was as composed as he, there would be too much indifference between us, and our union would be less pleasing and agreeable. If he did not love me, we should be uneasy together; if his love for me was too passionate, he would be troublesome to me. We are each of us exactly made for the other; he instructs me, I enliven him; the value of both is increased by our union, and we seem destined to form but one soul between us; to which he gives intelligence, and I direct the will. Even his advanced age redounds to our common advantage; for with the passion which agitated me, it is certain that had he been younger, I should have married him with more unwillingness, and my extreme reluctance would probably have prevented the happy revolution I have experienced.

My worthy friend, heaven directs the good intention of parents, and rewards the docility of children. God forbid that I should wish to insult your affliction. Nothing but a strong desire of giving you the firmest assurance with respect to my present condition, could induce me to add what I am going to mention. If, with the sentiments I formerly entertained for you, with the knowledge I have since acquired, I was once more my own mistress, and at liberty to chuse a husband, I call that Being, who has vouchsafed to enlighten me, and who reads the bottom of my heart, to witness my sincerity,

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when I declare that I should make choice, not of you, but Mr. Wolmar.

Perhaps it may be necessary, to complete your cure, that I should inform you of what farther remains in my mind. Mr. Wolmar is much older than I am. If, to punish my failings, heaven should deprive me of a worthy husband, whom I have so little deserved, it is my firm resolution never to espouse another. If he has not had the good fortune to meet with a chaste virgin, at least he will leave behind him a continent widow. You know me too well, to imagine that, after I have made this declaration, I shall ever recede from it.

What I have said to remove your doubts, may, in some measure, serve to resolve your objections against the confession which I think it my duty to make to my husband. He is too discreet to punish me for a mortifying step which repentance alone may atone for, and I am not more incapable of the artifice common to the women you speak of, than he is of harbouring such a suspicion. With respect to the reason you assign why such a confession is needless, it is certainly sophistical; for, though we can be under no obligation to a husband, as such, before marriage, yet that does not authorise one to pass upon him, for what one really is not. I perceived this before I married him, and tho' the oath which my father extorted from me prevented me from discharging my duty in this respect, I am not the less blameable, since it is a crime to take an unjust oath, and a farther crime to keep it. But I had another reason, which my heart dared not avow, and which

made my guilt greater still. Thank heaven, that reason subsists no longer.

A consideration more just, and of greater weight with me, is the danger of unnecessarily disturbing the peace of a worthy man, who derives his happiness from the esteem he bears to his wife. It certainly is not now in his power to break the tie which binds us together, nor in mine to have been more worthy of his choice. Therefore, by an indiscreet confidence, I run the risk of afflicting him without any advantage, and without reaping any other benefit from my sincerity, than that of discharging my mind of a cruel secret which oppresses me heavily. I am sensible that I shall be more composed when I have made the discovery ; but perhaps he would be less happy, and to prefer my own peace to his, would be a bad method of making reparation for my faults.

What then shall I do in this dilemma ? Till heaven shall better instruct me in my duty, I will follow your friendly advice ; I will be silent ; conceal my failings from my husband, and endeavour to repair them by a conduct, which may hereafter secure me a pardon.

To begin this necessary reformation, you must consent, my dear friend, that from this time, all correspondence between us shall cease. If Mr. Wolmar had received my confession, he might have determined how far we ought to gratify the sensations of friendship, and give innocent proofs of our mutual attachment ; but since I dare not consult him in this particular, I have learned to my cost, how far habits the most justifiable

able in appearance, are capable of leading us astray. It is time to grow discreet. Notwithstanding I think my heart securely fortified, yet I will no longer venture to be judge in my own cause, nor now I am a wife, will I give way to the same presumption which betrayed me when I was a maid. This is the last letter you will ever receive from me. I intreat you never to write to me again. Nevertheless, as I shall always continue to interest myself with the most tender concern for your welfare, and as my sentiment in this respect is as pure as the light, I shall be glad to hear of you occasionally, and to find you in possession of that happiness you deserve. You may write to Mr. Orbe from time to time when you have any thing interesting to communicate. I hope that the integrity of your soul will be expressed in your letters. Besides, my cousin is too virtuous and discreet, to shew me any part which is not fit for my perusal, and would not fail to suppress the correspondence, if you were capable of abusing it.

Farewell, my dear and worthy friend; if I thought that fortune could make you happy, I should desire you to go in pursuit of her; but perhaps you have reason to despise her, being master of such accomplishments as will enable you to thrive without her assistance. I would rather desire you to seek after happiness, which is the fortune of the wise; we have ever experienced that there is no felicity without virtue; but examine carefully whether the word virtue, taken in too abstracted a sense, has not more pomp than solidity in it, and whether it is not a term of parade, more calculated to dazzle others,

others, than to satisfy ourselves. I shudder when I reflect that they who secretly meditated adultery, should dare to talk of virtue ! do you know in what sense we understood this respectable epithet, which we abused while we were engaged in a criminal commerce ? it was the impetuous passion with which we were mutually inflamed, that disguised its transports under this sacred enthusiasm, in order to render them more dear to us, and to hold us longer in delusion. We were formed, I dare believe, to practise and cherish real virtue, but we were misguided in our pursuit, and we pursued a phantom. It is time to recover from this delusion ; it is time to give up from a false guide which has carried us too far astray. My dear friend, your return to wisdom will not be so difficult as you conceive. You have a guide within yourself, whose directions you have disregarded, but never entirely rejected. Your mind is sound, it is attached to what is right, and if just principles sometimes forsake you, it is because you do not use your utmost efforts to maintain them. Examine your conscience thoroughly, see whether you will not discover some neglected principle, which might have served to put your actions under better regulations, to have made them more consistent with each other, and with one common object. Believe me, it is not sufficient that virtue is the basis of your conduct, unless that basis itself is fixed on a firm foundation. Call to your mind those Indians, who imagine the world is supported by a great elephant, that elephant by a tortoise, and when you ask them on what the tortoise rests, they can answer you no farther.

I conjure you to regard the remonstrances of friendship, and to chuse a more certain road to happiness than that which has so long misguided us. I shall incessantly pray to heaven to grant us pure felicity, and I shall never be satisfied till we both enjoy it. And, if our hearts, in spite of our endeavours, recall the errors of our youth, let the reformation they produced at least warrant the recollection, that we may say, with the ancient philosopher—Alas! we should have perished, if we had not been undone.

Here ends the tedious sermon I have preached to you. I shall have enough to do hereafter to preach to myself. Farewell, my amiable friend, farewell for ever! so inflexible duty decrees: but be assured that the heart of Eloisa can never forget what was so dear to her — my God! what am I doing? the blotted paper will inform you. Ah! is it not excusable to dissolve in tenderness, when we take the last farewell of a friend?

L E T T E R CXIV.

To Lord B——.

YES, my Lord, I confess it; the weight of life is too heavy for my soul. I have long endured it as a burden; I have lost every thing which could make it dear to me, and nothing remains but irksomeness and vexation. I am told however, that I am not at liberty to dispose of my life, without the permission of that
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Being from whom I received it. I am sensible likewise, that you have a right over it by more titles than one. Your care has twice preserved it, and your goodness is its constant security. I will never dispose of it, till I am certain that I may do it without a crime, and till I have not the least hope of employing it for your service.

You told me that I should be of use to you; why did you deceive me? Since we have been in *London*, so far from thinking of employing me in your concerns, you have been kind enough to make me your only concern. How superfluous is your obliging solicitude! My Lord, you know I abhor a crime, even worse than I detest life; I adore the supreme Being — I owe every thing to you; I have an affection for you; you are the only person on earth to whom I am attached. Friendship and duty may chain a wretch to this earth: sophistry and vain pretences will never detain him. Enlighten my understanding, speak to my heart; I am ready to hear you, but remember, that despair is not to be imposed upon.

You would have me apply to the test of reason: I will; let us reason. You desire me to deliberate in proportion to the importance of the question in debate; I agree to it. Let us investigate truth with temper and moderation. Let us discuss this general proposition with the same indifference we would treat any other. Robeck wrote an apology for suicide before he put an end to his life. I will not, after his example, write a book on the subject, neither am I well satisfied with that which he has penned, but I hope in this discussion, at least to imitate his moderation.

I have for a long time meditated on this awful subject. You must be sensible that I have, for you know my destiny, and yet I am alive. The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the question may be reduced to this fundamental proposition. Every man has a right by nature, to pursue what he thinks good, and avoid what he thinks evil, in all respects which are not injurious to others. When our life therefore becomes a misery to ourselves, and is of advantage to no one, we are at liberty to put an end to our being. If there is any such thing as a clear and self-evident principle, certainly this is one, and if this be subverted, there is scarce an action in life, which may not be made criminal.

Let us hear what the philosophers say on this subject. First, they consider life is something which is not our own, because we hold it as a gift; but because it has been given to us, is it for that reason our own? Has not God given these sophists two arms? nevertheless when they are under apprehensions of a mortification, they do not scruple to amputate one, or both if there be occasion. By a parity of reasoning, we may convince those who believe in the immortality of the soul; for if I sacrifice my arm to the preservation of something more precious, which is my body, I have the same right to sacrifice my body to the preservation of something more valuable, which is the happiness of my existence. If all the gifts which heaven has bestowed, are naturally designed for our good, they are certainly too apt to change their nature; and Providence has endowed us with reason, that we may discern the difference. If this rule did not authorize us to

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chuse the one and reject the other, to what use would it serve among mankind?

But they turn this weak objection into a thousand shapes. They consider a man living upon earth, as a soldier placed on duty. God, say they, has fixed you in this world, why do you quit your station without his leave. But you, who argue thus, has he not stationed you in the town where you was born, why therefore do you quit it without his leave? is not misery, of itself, a sufficient permission? whatever station Providence has assigned me, whether it be in a regiment, or on the earth at large, he intended me to stay there while I found my situation agreeable, and to leave it when it became intolerable. This is the voice of nature, and the voice of God. I agree that we must wait for an order; but when I die a natural death, God does not order me to quit life, he takes it from me: it is by rendering life insupportable, that he orders me to quit it. In the first case, I resist with all my force; in the second, I have the merit of obedience.

Can you conceive that there are some people so absurd as to arraign suicide as a kind of rebellion against Providence, by an attempt to fly from his laws? but we do not put an end to our being, in order to withdraw ourselves from his commands, but to execute them. What! does the power of God extend no farther than to my body; is there a spot in the universe, is there any being in the universe which is not subject to his power, and will that power have less immediate influence over me, when my being is refined and thereby becomes less compound, and of nearer

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resemblance to the divine essence? no, his justice and goodness are the foundation of my hopes, and if I thought that death would withdraw me from his power I would give up my resolution to die.

This is one of the quibbles of the *Phedo*, which in other respects, abounds with sublime truths. If your slave destroys himself says *Socrates* to *Cebes*, would you not punish him, for having unjustly deprived you of your property: prithee, good *Socrates*, do we not belong to God after we are dead? The case you put, is not applicable; you ought to argue thus: if you incumber your slave with a habit which confines him from discharging his duty properly, will you punish him for quitting it in order to render you better service? the grand error lies in making life of too much importance; as if our existence depended upon it, and that death was a total annihilation. Our life is of no consequence in the sight of God; it is of no importance in the eyes of reason, neither ought it to be of any in our sight; and when we quit our body, we only lay aside an inconvenient habit. Is this circumstance so painful, to be the occasion of so much disturbance? my Lord, these declaimers are not in earnest. Their arguments are absurd and cruel, for they aggravate the supposed crime, as if it put a period to existence, and they punish it, as if that existence was eternal.

With respect to Plato's *Phedo*, which has furnished them with the only specious argument that has ever been advanced, the question is discussed there in a very light and desultory manner. *Socrates* being condemned, by an unjust judgment, to lose his life in a few hours, had no
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occasion to enter into an accurate inquiry whether he was at liberty to dispose of it himself. Supposing him really to have been the author of those discourses which Plato ascribes to him, yet believe me, my Lord, he would have meditated with more attention on the subject, had he been in circumstances which required him to reduce his speculations to practice;—and a strong proof that no valid objection can be drawn from that immortal work against the right of disposing of our own lives, is, that Cato read it twice through the very night that he destroyed himself.

The same sophisters make it a question whether life can ever be an evil? but when we consider the multitude of errors, torments and vices with which it abounds, one would rather be inclined to doubt whether it can ever be a blessing. Guilt incessantly besieges the most virtuous of mankind. Every moment he lives, he is in danger of falling a prey to the wicked, or of being wicked himself. To struggle, and to endure, is his lot in this world; that of the dishonest man is to do evil, and to suffer. In every other particular they differ, and only agree in sharing the miseries of life in common. If you required authorities and facts, I could cite you the oracles of old, the answers of the sages; and produce instances where acts of virtue have been recompensed with death. But let us leave these considerations, my Lord; it is to you whom I address myself, and I ask you what is the chief attention of a wise man in this life, except if I may be allowed the expression, to collect himself inwardly, and endeavour, even while he lives, to be dead to every object of sense? The only way

way by which wisdom directs us to avoid the miseries of human nature, is it not to detach ourselves from all earthly objects, from every thing that is gross in our composition, to retire within ourselves, and to raise our thoughts to sublime contemplations? If therefore our misfortunes are derived from our passions and our errors, with what eagerness should we wish for a state which will deliver us both from the one and the other? what is the fate of those sons of sensuality, who indiscreetly multiply their torments by their pleasures? they in fact destroy their existence, by extending their connections in this life; they increase the weight of their crimes by their numerous attachments; they relish no enjoyments but what are succeeded by a thousand bitter wants; the more lively their sensibility, the more acute their sufferings; the stronger they are attached to life, the more wretched they become.

But admitting it, in general, a benefit to mankind to crawl upon the earth with gloomy sadness; I do not mean to intimate that the human race ought with one common consent to destroy themselves, and make the world one immense grave. But there are miserable beings, who are too much exalted to be governed by vulgar opinion; to them, despair and grievous torments are the passports of nature. It would be as ridiculous to suppose that life can be a blessing to such men, as it was absurd in the sophister Possidonius to deny that it was an evil, at the same time that he endured all the torments of the gout. While life is agreeable to us, we earnestly wish to prolong it, and nothing but a sense
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of extreme misery can extinguish the desire of existence; for we naturally conceive a violent dread of death, and this dread conceals the miseries of human nature from our sight. We drag a painful and melancholy life, for a long time before we can resolve to quit it; but when once life becomes so insupportable as to overcome the horror of death, then existence is evidently a great evil, and we cannot disengage ourselves from it too soon. Therefore, though we cannot exactly ascertain the point at which it ceases to be a blessing, yet at least we are certain that it is an evil long before it appears to be such, and with every sensible man the right of quitting life, is by a great deal precedent to the temptation.

This is not all. After they have denied that life can be an evil, in order to bar our right of making away with ourselves; they confess immediately afterwards that it is an evil, by reproaching us with want of courage to support it. According to them, it is cowardice to withdraw ourselves from pain and trouble, and there are none but dastards who destroy themselves. O Rome, thou victrix of the world, what a race of cowards did thy empire produce! let Arria, Eponina, Lucretia, be of the number; they were women. But Brutus, Cassius, and thou great and divine Cato, who didst share with the gods the adoration of an astonished world, thou whose sacred and august presence animated the Romans with holy zeal, and made tyrants tremble, little did thy proud admirers imagine that paltry rhetoricians immured in the dusty corner of a college, would ever attempt to prove that thou wert a coward, for having preferred death to a shameful existence.

O the dignity and energy of your modern writers! how sublime, how intrepid are you with your pens? but tell me thou great and valiant hero, who dost so courageously decline the battle, in order to endure the pain of living somewhat longer; when a spark of fire lights upon your hand, why do you withdraw it in such haste? how? are you such a coward that you dare not bear the scorching of fire? nothing, you say, can oblige you to endure the burning spark; and what obliges me to endure life? was the creation of a man of more difficulty to Providence, than that of a straw? and is not both one and the other equally the work of his hands?

Without doubt, it is an evidence of great fortitude to bear with firmness the misery which we cannot shun; none but a fool however, will voluntarily endure evils which he can avoid without a crime, and it is very often a great crime to suffer pain unnecessarily. He who has not resolution to deliver himself from a miserable being by a speedy death, is like one who would rather suffer a wound to mortify, than trust to the surgeon's knife for his cure. Come, thou worthy — cut off this leg, which endangers my life. I will see it done without shrinking, and will give that hero leave to call me coward, who suffers his leg to mortify, because he dares not undergo the same operation.

I acknowledge that there are duties owing to others, the nature of which will not allow every man to dispose of his life; but in return, how many are there which give him a right to dispose of it? let a magistrate on whom the welfare of

a nation depends, let a father of a family who is bound to procure subsistence for his children, let a debtor who might ruin his creditors, let these at all events discharge their duty ; admitting a thousand other civil and domestic relations to oblige an honest and unfortunate man to support the misery of life, to avoid the greater evil of doing injustice, is it therefore, under circumstances totally different, incumbent on us to preserve a life oppressed with a swarm of miseries, when it can be of no service but to him who has not courage to die ? “ Kill me, my
“ child, says the decrepid savage to his son who
“ carries him on his shoulders, and bends under
“ his weight ; the enemy is at hand ; go to battle with thy brethren, go and preserve thy
“ children, and do not suffer thy helpless father
“ to fall alive into the hands of those whose relations he has mangled.” Though hunger, sickness and poverty, those domestic plagues, more dreadful than savage enemies, may allow a wretched cripple to consume, in a sick bed, the provisions of a family which can scarce subsist itself ; yet he who has no connections, whom heaven has reduced to the necessity of living alone, whose wretched existence can produce no good, why should not he, at least, have the right of quitting a station where his complaints are troublesome, and his sufferings of no benefit.

Weigh these considerations, my Lord ; collect these arguments, and you will find that they may be reduced to the most simple of nature's rights, of which no man of sense yet ever entertained a doubt. In fact, why should we be allowed to cure ourselves of the gout, and not to get rid of the

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the misery of life? do not both evils proceed from the same hand? to what purpose is it to say, that death is painful? are drugs agreeable to be taken? no, nature revolts against both. Let them prove therefore that it is more justifiable to cure a transient disorder by the application of remedies, than to free ourselves from an incurable evil by putting an end to life; and let them shew how it can be less criminal to use the bark for a fever, than to take opium for the stone. If we consider the object in view, it is in both cases to free ourselves from painful sensations; if we regard the means, both one and the other are equally natural; if we consider the repugnance of our nature, it operates equally on both sides; if we attend to the will of Providence, can we struggle against any evil, of which it is not the author? can we deliver ourselves from any torment which the hand of God has not inflicted? what are the bounds which limit his power, and when is resistance lawful? are we then to make no alteration in the condition of things, because every thing is in the state he appointed? must we do nothing in this life, for fear of infringing his laws, or is it in our power to break them if we would? no, my Lord, the occupation of man is more great and noble. God did not give him life, that he should supinely remain in a state of constant inactivity. But he gave him freedom to act, conscience to will, and reason to choose what is good. He has constituted him sole judge of all his actions. He has engraved this precept in his heart, Do whatever you conceive to be for your own good, provided you thereby do no injury to others. If my sensations tell me that death

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is eligible, I resist his orders by an obstinate resolution to live, for by making death desirable, he directs me to put an end to my being.

My Lord, I appeal to your wisdom and candour; what more infallible maxims can reason deduce from religion, with respect to suicide? If christians have adopted contrary tenets, they are neither drawn from the principles of religion, nor from the only sureguide, the Scriptures, but borrowed from the pagan philosophers. Lactantius and Augustine, the first who propagated this new doctrine, of which Jesus Christ and his apostles take no notice, ground their arguments entirely on the reasoning of Phedo, which I have already controverted; so that the believers, who, in this respect, think they are supported by the authority of the Gospel, are in fact only countenanced by the authority of Plato. In truth, where do we find throughout the whole bible any law against suicide, or so much as a bare disapprobation of it; and is it not very unaccountable, that among the instances produced of persons who devoted themselves to death, we do not find the least word of improbation against examples of this kind? nay, what is more; the instance of Samson's voluntary death is authorized by a miracle, by which he revenges himself of his enemies. Would this miracle have been displayed to justify a crime, and would this man who lost his strength, by suffering himself to be seduced by the allurements of a woman, have recovered it to commit an authorized crime, as if God himself would practise deceit on men?

Thou shalt do no murder, says the decalogue; what are we to infer from this? if this commandment



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mandment is to be taken literally, we must not destroy malefactors, nor our enemies : and Moses, who put so many people to death, was a bad interpreter of his own precept. If there are any exceptions, certainly the first must be in favour of suicide, because it is exempt from any degree of violence and injustice; the two only circumstances which can make homicide criminal; and because nature, moreover, has in this respect, thrown sufficient obstacles in the way.

But still, they tell us, we must patiently endure the evils which God inflicts; and make a merit of our sufferings. This application however of the maxims of Christianity is very ill-calculated to satisfy our judgment. Man is subject to a thousand troubles, his life is a complication of evils, and he seems to have been born only to suffer. Reason directs him to shun as many of these evils as he can avoid; and religion, which is never in contradiction to reason, approves of his endeavours. But how inconsiderable is the account of these evils, in comparison with those he is obliged to endure against his will? It is with respect to these, that a merciful God allows man to claim the merit of resistance; he receives the tribute he has been pleased to impose, as a voluntary homage, and he places our resignation in this life to our profit in the next. True repentance is derived from nature; if man endures patiently whatever he is obliged to suffer, he does, in this respect, all that God requires of him; and if any one is so inflated with pride, as to attempt more, he is a madman, who ought to be confined, or an impostor,

impostor, who ought to be punished. Let us therefore, without scruple, fly from all the evils we can avoid; there will still be too many left for us to endure. Let us, without remorse, quit life itself when it becomes a torment to us, since it is in our own power to do it; and that in so doing, we neither offend God nor man. If we would offer a sacrifice to the supreme Being, is it nothing to undergo death? let us devote to God that which he demands by the voice of reason, and into his hands let us peaceably surrender our souls.

Such are the liberal precepts which good sense dictates to every man, and which religion authorises*. Let us apply these precepts to ourselves.

* A strange letter this, for the discussion of such a subject. Do men argue so coolly on a question of this nature, when they examine it on their own accounts? Is the letter a forgery, or does the author reason only with an intent to be refuted? what makes our opinion in this particular dubious, is the example of Robeck which he cites, and which seems to warrant his own. Robeck deliberated so gravely that he had patience to write a book, a large, voluminous, weighty, and dispassionate book; and when he had concluded, according to his principles, that it was lawful to put an end to our being, he destroyed himself with the same composure that he wrote. Let us beware of the prejudices of the times, and of particular countries. When suicide is out of fashion, we conclude that none but madmen destroy themselves; all the efforts of courage appear chimerical to dastardly minds; every one judges of others by himself. Nevertheless, how many instances are there, well attested, of men, in every other respect perfectly discreet; who, without remorse,

selves. You have condescended to disclose your mind to me ; I am acquainted with your uneasiness ; you do not endure less than myself ; your troubles, like mine, are incurable ; and they are the more remediless, as the laws of honour are more immutable than those of fortune. You bear them, I must confess, with fortitude. Virtue supports you ; advance but one step farther, and she disengages you. You intreat me to suffer ; my Lord ! I dare importune you to put an end to your sufferings ; and I leave you to judge which of us is most dear to the other.

Why should we delay doing that, which we must do at last ? shall we wait till old age and decrepid baseness attach us to life, after they have robbed it of its charms, and till we are doomed to drag an infirm and decrepid body with labour, ignominy, and pain. We are at an age when the soul has vigour to disengage itself with ease from its shackles, and when a man knows how to die as he ought ; when farther advanced in years, he suffers himself to be torn from life, which he quits with reluctance. Let us take advantage of this time when the tedium of life makes death desirable ; and let us tremble for fear it should come in all its horrors, at the moment when we could wish to avoid it. I remember the time, when I prayed to heaven only for a single hour of life, and when I should have died in despair, if it had not been granted.

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Ah! what a pain it is to burſt aſunder the ties which attach our hearts to this world, and how adviſeable it is to quit life the moment the connexion is broken; I am ſenſible, my Lord, that we are both worthy of a purer manſion; virtue points it out, and deſtiny invites us to ſeek it. May the friendship which invites us, preſerve our union to the laſteſt hour. O what a pleaſure for two ſincere friends voluntarily to end their days in each other's arms, to intermingle their laſteſt breath, and at the ſame inſtant to give up the ſoul which they ſhared in common! What pain, what regret can infect their laſt moments? what do they quit by taking leave of the world? They go together; they quit nothing.

L E T T E R CXV.

A N S W E R.

THOU art diſtracted, my friend, by a fatal paſſion; be more diſcreet; do not give council, whiſt thou ſtandeſt ſo much in need of advice. I have known greater evils than yours. I am armed with fortitude of mind; I am an Engliſhman, and not afraid to die; but I know how to live and ſuffer, as becomes a man. I have ſeen death near at hand, and have view'd it with too much indifference to go in ſearch of it.

It is true, I thought you might be of uſe to me; my affection ſtood in need of yours: your endeavours might have been ſerviceable to me; your underſtanding might have enlightened me in the moſt important concern of my life; if I
do

do not avail myself of it, who are you to impute it to? where is it? what is become of it? what are you capable of? of what use can you be in your present condition? what service can I expect from you? a senseless grief renders you stupid and unconcerned. Thou art no man; thou art nothing; and if I did not consider what thou mightst be, I cannot conceive any thing more abject.

There is need of no other proof than your letter itself. Formerly I could discover in you good sense and truth. Your sentiments were just, your reflections proper, and I liked you not only from judgment but choice; for I considered your influence as an additional motive to excite me to the study of wisdom. But what do I perceive now in the arguments of your letter, with which you appear to be so highly satisfied? A wretched and perpetual sophistry, which in the erroneous deviations of your reason, shews the disorder of your mind; and which I would not stoop to refute, if I did not commiserate your delirium.

To subvert all your reasoning with one word, I would only ask you a single question. You who believe in the existence of a God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the free-will of man; you surely cannot suppose that an intelligent being is embodied, and stationed on the earth by accident only, to exist, to suffer, and to die. It is certainly most probable that the life of man is not without some design, some end, some moral object. I intreat you to give me a direct answer to this point; after which

we will deliberately examine your letter, and you will blush to have written it.

But let us wave all general maxims, about which we often hold violent disputes, without adopting any of them in practice; for in their application, we always find some particular circumstances, which make such an alteration in the state of things, that every one thinks himself dispensed from submitting to the rules, which he prescribes to others; and it is well known, that every man who establishes general principles, deems them obligatory on all the world, himself excepted. Once more let us speak to you in particular.

You believe that you have a right to put an end to your being. Your proof is of a very singular nature; "because I am disposed to die, lay you I have a right to destroy myself." This is certainly a very convenient argument for villains of all kinds: they ought to be very thankful to you for the arms with which you have furnished them; there can be no crimes, which, according to your arguments, may not be justified by the temptation to perpetrate them, and as soon as the impetuosity of passion shall prevail over the horror of guilt, their disposition to do evil will be considered as a right to commit it.

Is it lawful for you therefore to quit life? I should be glad to know whether you have yet begun to live? what! was you placed here on earth to do nothing in this world? did not heaven when it gave you existence, give you some task or employment? If you have accomplished your day's work before evening, rest yourself
for

for the remainder of the day, if you have a right to do it; but let us see your work! What answer are you prepared to make the supreme Judge, when he demands an account of your time? Tell me, what can you say to him? — I have seduced a virtuous girl: I have forsaken a friend in his distress. Thou unhappy wretch! point out to me that just man who can boast that he has lived long enough; let me learn from him in what manner I ought to have spent my days, to be at liberty to quit life.

You enumerate the evils of human nature. You are not ashamed to exhaust common-place topics, which have been hackney'd over a hundred times; and you conclude that life is an evil. But search, examine into the order of things; and see whether you can find any good which is not intermingled with evil. Does it therefore follow that there is no good in the universe, and can you confound what is in its own nature evil, with that which is only an evil accidentally? You have confessed yourself, that the transitory and passive life of man is of no consequence, and only bears respect to matter, from which he will soon be disencumbered; but his active and moral life, which ought to have most influence over his nature, consists in the exercise of free-will. Life is an evil to a wicked man in prosperity, and a blessing to an honest man in distress: for it is not its casual modification, but its relation to some final object, which makes it either good or bad. After all, what are these cruel torments which force you to abandon life? do you imagine that under your affected impartiality in the enumeration of

the evils of this life, I did not discover that you was ashamed to speak of your own? Trust me, and do not at once abandon every virtue. Preserve at least your wonted sincerity, and speak thus openly to your friend; "I have lost all hope
" of seducing a modest woman, I am obliged
" therefore to be a man of virtue; I had much
" rather die."

You are weary of living; and you tell me, that life is an evil. Sooner or later you will receive consolation, and then you will say life is a blessing. You will speak with more truth, though not with better reason; for nothing will have altered but yourself. Begin the alteration then from this day, and since all the evil you lament is in the disposition of your own mind, correct your irregular appetites, and do not set your house on fire, to avoid the trouble of putting it in order.

I endure misery, say you; is it in my power to avoid suffering? but this is changing the state of the question: for the subject of enquiry is, not whether you suffer, but whether your life is an evil? Let us proceed. You are wretched, you naturally endeavour to extricate yourself from misery. Let us see whether, for that purpose, it is necessary to die.

Let us for a moment examine the natural tendency of the afflictions of the mind, as in direct opposition to the evils of the body, the two substances being of contrary natures. The latter become worse and more inveterate the longer they continue, and at length utterly destroy this mortal machine. The former, on the contrary, being only external and transitory modifications

difications of an immortal and uncompounded essence, are insensibly effaced, and leave the mind in its original form, which is not susceptible of alteration. Grief, disquietude, regret, and despair, are evils of short duration which never take root in the mind, and experience always falsifies that bitter reflection, which makes us imagine our misery will have no end. I will go farther; I cannot imagine that the vices which contaminate us, are more inherent in our nature, than the troubles we endure; I not only believe that they perish with the body which gives them birth, but I think, beyond all doubt, that a longer life would be sufficient to reform mankind, and that many ages of youth would teach us that nothing is preferable to virtue.

However this may be, as the greatest part of our physical evils are incessantly encreasing, the acute pains of the body, when they are incurable, may justify a man's destroying himself; for all his faculties being distracted with pain, and the evil being without remedy, he has no longer any use either of his will or of his reason; he ceases to be a man before he is dead, and does nothing more in taking away his life, than quit a body which incumbers him, and in which his soul is no longer resident.

But it is otherwise with the afflictions of the mind; which, let them be ever so acute, always carry their remedy with them. In fact, what is it that makes any evil intolerable? nothing but its duration. The operations of surgery are generally much more painful, than the disorders they cure; but the pain occasioned by the

latter is lasting, that of the operation is momentary, and therefore preferable. What occasion is there therefore for any operation to remove troubles which die of course by their duration, the only circumstance which could render them insupportable? Is it reasonable to apply such desperate remedies to evils which expire of themselves? To a man who values himself on his fortitude, and who estimates years at their real value, of two ways by which he may extricate himself from the same troubles, which will appear preferable, death or time? Have patience, and you will be cured. What would you desire more?

Oh! you will say, it doubles my afflictions, to reflect that they will cease at last! this is the vain sophistry of grief! an apothegm void of reason, of propriety, and perhaps of sincerity. What an absurd motive of despair is the hope of terminating misery*! Even allowing this fantastical reflection, who would not chuse to increase the present pain for a moment, under the assurance of putting an end to it, as we scarify a wound in order to heal it? and admitting any charm in grief, to make us in love with suffering, when we release ourselves from it by putting an end to our being, do we not at that instant incur all that we apprehend hereafter?

* No, my Lord, we do not put an end to misery by these means, but rather fill the measure of affliction, by bursting asunder the last ties which attach us to felicity. When we regret what was dear to us, grief itself still attaches us to the object we lament, which is a state less deplorable, than to be attached to nothing.

Reflect

Reflect thoroughly, young man; what are ten, twenty, thirty years, in competition with immortality? pain and pleasure pass like a shadow; life slides away in an instant; it is nothing of itself; its value depends on the use we make of it. The good that we have done is all that remains, and it is that alone which marks its importance.

Therefore do not say any more that your existence is an evil; since it depends upon yourself to make it a blessing; and if it be an evil to have lived, this is an additional reason for prolonging life. Do not pretend neither to say any more that you are at liberty to die; for it is as much as to say that you have power to alter your nature, that you have a right to revolt against the Author of your being, and to frustrate the end of your existence. But when you add, that your death does injury to no one, do you recollect that you make this declaration to your friend?

Your death does injury to no one? I understand you! You think the loss I shall sustain by your death of no importance; you deem my affliction of no consequence. I will urge to you no more the rights of friendship which you despise, but are there not obligations still more dear*, which ought to induce you to preserve your life? If there be a person in the world who loved you to that degree as to be unwilling to survive you, and whose happiness depends on yours, do you think that you have no obliga-

* Obligations more dear than those of friendship! Is it a philosopher who talks thus! But this affected sophist was of an amorous disposition,

tions to her? will not the execution of your wicked design disturb the peace of a mind, which has been, with such difficulty, restored to its former innocence? are not you afraid to add fresh torments to a heart of such sensibility? are not you apprehensive lest your death should be attended with a loss more fatal, which would deprive the world and virtue itself of its brightest ornament? and if she should survive you, are not you afraid to rouse up remorse in her bosom, which is more grievous to support than life itself? Thou ungrateful friend, thou indelicate lover! wilt thou always be taken up wholly with thyself? wilt thou always think on thy own troubles alone? hast thou no regard for the happiness of one who was so dear to thee? and cannot thou resolve to live for her, who was willing to die with thee?

You talk of the duties of a magistrate, and of a father of a family; and because you are not under those circumstances, you think yourself absolutely free. And are you then under no obligations to society, to whom you are indebted for your preservation, your talents, your understanding? do you owe nothing to your native country, and to those unhappy people who may need your assistance? O what an accurate calculation you make! among the obligations you have enumerated, you have only omitted those of a man and of a citizen. Where is the virtuous patriot, who refused to enlist under a foreign prince, because his blood ought not to be spilt but in the service of his country; and who now, in a fit of despair, is ready to shed it against the express prohibition of the laws? The laws,

the

the laws, young man! did any wife man ever despise them? Socrates, though innocent, out of regard to them, refused to quit his prison. You do not scruple to violate them by quitting life unjustly; and you ask, what injury do I do?

You endeavour to justify yourself by examples. You presume to mention the Romans: you talk of the Romans! it becomes you indeed to cite these illustrious names. Tell me, did Brutus die a lover in despair, and did Cato plunge the dagger in his breast for his mistress? Thou weak and abject man, what resemblance is there between Cato and thee? show me the common standard between that sublime soul and thine. Ah vain wretch, hold thy peace! I am afraid to profane his name by a vindication of his conduct. At that august and sacred name, every friend to virtue should bow to the ground, and honour the memory of the greatest hero in silence.

How ill you have selected your examples, and how meanly you judge of the Romans, if you imagine that they thought themselves at liberty to quit life so soon as it became a burden to them. Recur to the excellent days of that republic, and see whether you will find a single citizen of virtue, who thus freed himself from the discharge of his duty, even after the most cruel misfortunes. When Regulus was on his return to Carthage, did he prevent the torments which he knew were preparing for him, by destroying himself? What would not Posthumus have given, when obliged to pass under the yoke at Caudium, had this resource been justifiable? how much did even the senate admire that effort of courage, which enabled the consul Varro to survive his defeat?

defeat? For what reason did so many generals voluntarily surrender themselves to their enemies, they to whom ignominy was so dreadful, and who were so little afraid of dying? It was because they considered their blood, their life, and their latest breath, as devoted to their country; and neither shame nor misfortune could dissuade them from this sacred duty. But when the laws were subverted, and the state became a prey to tyranny, the citizens resumed their natural liberty, and the right they had over their own lives. When Rome was no more, it was lawful for the Romans to give up their lives; they had discharged their duties on earth, they had no longer any country to defend, they were therefore at liberty to dispose of their lives, and to obtain that freedom for themselves, which they could not recover for their country. After having spent their days in the service of expiring Rome, and in fighting for the defence of its laws, they died great and virtuous as they had lived, and their death was an additional tribute to the glory of the Roman name, since none of them beheld a sight above all others most dishonourable, that of a true citizen stooping to an usurper.

But thou, what art thou? what hast thou done? dost thou think to excuse thyself on account of thy obscurity? does thy weakness exempt thee from thy duty, and because thou hast neither rank nor distinction in thy country, art thou less subject to the laws? It becomes you vastly to presume to talk of dying, while you owe the service of your life to your equals? Know that a death, such as you meditate, is shameful and

sur-

surreptitious. It is a theft committed on mankind in general. Before you quit life, return the benefits you have received from every individual. But, say you, I have no attachments. I am useless in the world. O thou young philosopher! art thou ignorant that thou canst not move a single step without finding some duty to fulfil; and that every man is useful to society, even by means of his existence alone.

Hear me, thou rash young man! (thou art dear to me. I commiserate thy errors. If the least sense of virtue still remains in thy breast, attend, and let me teach thee to be reconciled to life. Whenever thou art tempted to quit it, say to thyself — “Let me at least do one good action before I die.” Then go in search for one in a state of indigence whom thou mayest relieve; for one under misfortunes, whom thou may’st comfort; for one under oppression, whom thou may’st defend. Introduce to me those unhappy wretches whom my rank keeps at a distance. Do not be afraid of misusing my purse, or my credit: make free with them; distribute my fortune, make me rich. If this consideration restrains you to day, it will restrain you to-morrow; if to-morrow, it will restrain you all your life. If it has no power to restrain you, die! you are below my care.

LETTER CXVI.

From Lord B—

I Cannot, my dear friend, embrace you to-day as I was in hopes I should, being detained two days longer at Kensington. It is the way of the court to be very busy in doing nothing, and all affairs run in a constant succession without being dispatched. The business which has confined me here eight days, might have been concluded in two hours; but as the chief concern of the ministry is to preserve an air of business, they waste more time in putting me off, than it would cost them to dispatch me. My impatience, which is rather too evident, does not contribute to shorten the delay. You know that the court is not suited to my turn; I find it more intolerable since we have lived together, and I had rather a hundred times share your melancholy, than be pestered with the knaves which abound in this country.

Nevertheless, in conversing with these busy sluggards, a thought struck me with regard to you, and I only wait your consent to dispose of you to advantage. I perceive that in struggling with your affliction, you suffer both from your uneasiness of mind, and from your resistance. If you are determined to live and overcome it, you have formed this resolution less in conformity to the dictates of reason and honour, than in compliance with your friends. But this is not enough. You must recover the relish of life to discharge its duties as you ought; for with so much

much indifference about every thing, you will succeed in nothing. We may both of us talk as we will; but reason alone will never restore you to your reason. It is necessary that a multiplicity of new and striking objects should in some measure withdraw you from that attention which your mind fixes solely on one object of its affections. To recover yourself, you must be detached from inward reflection, and nothing but the agitation of a busy life, can restore you to serenity.

An opportunity offers for this purpose, which is not to be disregarded; a great and noble enterprise is on foot, and such an one as has not been equalled for ages. It depends on you to be a spectator and assistant in it. You will see the grandest sight which the eye of man ever beheld, and your turn for observation will be abundantly gratified. Your appointment will be honourable, and, with the talents you are master of, will only require courage and good health. You will find it attended with more danger than confinement, which will make it more agreeable to you; and, in few words, your engagement will not be for any long time. I cannot give you farther information at present; because this scheme, which is almost ripe for discovery, is nevertheless a secret with which I am not yet acquainted in all its particulars. I will only add, that if you decline this lucky and extraordinary opportunity, you will probably never recover it again, and will regret it as long as you live.

I have ordered my servant, who is the bearer of this letter, to find you out wherever you are, and not to return without a line; for the affair

affair requires dispatch, and I must give an answer before I leave this place.

LETTER CXVII.

ANSWER.

DO, my Lord; dispose of me; I will agree to whatever you propose. Till I am worthy to serve you, at least I claim the merit of obeying you.

LETTER CXVIII.

From Lord B.

SINCE you approve of the thought I suggested, I will not delay a minute to acquaint you that every thing is concluded, and to explain to you the nature of the engagement I have entered into, in pursuance of the authority you gave me to make the agreement on your behalf.

You know that a squadron of five men of war is equipped at Plymouth, and that they are ready to set sail. The commodore is Mr. George Anson, a brave and experienced officer, and an old friend of mine. It is destined for the South-sea, whither it is to sail through the straits of Le Maire, and to come back by the East-Indies. You see therefore that the object is no less than to make the tour of the world, an expedition which, it is imagined, will take up three years.

I could have entered you as a volunteer; but to give you more importance among the crew, I have obtained the addition of a title for you, and you stand on the list in the capacity of engineer of the land forces: this will be more suitable to you, because, having followed the bent of your genius from your first outset in the world, I know you made it your early study.

I propose to return to London to-morrow, to present you to Mr. Anson within two days. In the mean time, take care to get your equipage ready, and provide yourself with books and instruments; for the embarkation is ready, and only waits for sailing orders. My dear friend, I hope that God will bring you back from this long voyage, in full health of mind and body; and that at your return, we shall meet never to part again.

I do not rightly understand this: Kensington not being above a mile and a half from London, the noblemen who go to court, do not lie there; yet Lord B— tells us, he was obliged to stay there I know not how many days.

LET-

LETTER CXIX.

To Mrs. ORBE.

MY dear and lovely cousin, I am preparing to make the tour of the world; I am going into another hemisphere, in pursuit of that peace which I could not enjoy in this. Fool that I am! I am going to wander over the universe, without being able to find one place where my heart can rest. I am going to find a retreat from the world, where I may be at a distance from you. But it becomes me to regard the will of a friend, a benefactor, a father. Without the smallest hopes of a cure, at least I will take pains for it; Eloisa and virtue require the sacrifice. In three hours time I shall be at the mercy of the winds; in three days, I shall lose sight of Europe; in three months, I shall be in unknown seas, raging with perpetual tempests; in three years perhaps. . . . How dreadful is the thought of never seeing you more! alas! the greatest danger is in my own breast; for whatever may be my fate I am resolved, I swear, that you shall see me worthy to appear in your sight, or you shall never behold me more.

Lord B —, who is on his return to Rome, will deliver this letter in his way, and acquaint you with all particulars concerning me. You are acquainted with his disposition, and you will easily guess at those circumstances which he does not chuse to communicate. You was once
no

no stranger to mine; therefore you may likewise form some judgment of those things which I do not care to relate myself.

Your friend, I hear, has the happiness to be a mother as well as yourself. Ought she then to be? O inexorable heaven! O my mother, why did heaven in its wrath grant you a son?

I must conclude: I feel that I must. Farewell, ye pure and celestial souls! Farewell, ye tender and inseparable friends, the best women on earth! Each of you is the only object worthy of the other's affections. May you mutually contribute to each other's happiness. Deign now and then to call to mind the memory of an unfortunate wretch, who only existed to share with you every sentiment of his soul, and who ceased to live, the moment he was divided from you. If ever——. . . . I hear the signal, and the shouts of the sailors. The wind blows strong, and the sails are spread. I must on board: I must be gone. Thou vast and immense sea, which perhaps wilt bury me beneath thy waves! O that upon thy swelling surge I could recover that calm which has forsaken my troubled soul!

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



